



VISTA COMMUNITY CHURCH
FAMILY FRAMEWORK



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INTRODUCTION

In its almost 20 year life, Vista has gone through many different seasons. Family ministry, and almost every other facet of the church, has looked somewhat differently in each. In every season, we can be sure God has used Vista and the faithfulness of its family for His glory. Looking forward to this next chapter and taking into consideration what our world and families need most, the themes that keep occurring are **unity and mission**. The world is unquestionably broken, and that gives us a unique opportunity for the church to shine as God's ambassador. If we are to be on mission together, we'll need to excel in unity and steadfastness. Our families must be rooted deeply in the Lord, being disciplined and disciplining one another in truth, finding community to stay afloat in life's storms and engagement in the church that breeds personal reflection and commitment to the Lord's way. Or as Peter proclaims, *"Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (2 Peter 1:5-8)

Every teaching, program, service project, small group, kids class, youth group, and Bible study is pushing us toward this aim – how do we more closely align ourselves with God's truth, character, and love so that we can affect the world in each day we're given. This must be true in our individual lives, in our family lives, and in our church as a whole.

"Family" can mean many different things to all of us and each variation of family is **vital** to the health of the church. Within every stage of life, there are so many possible expressions of what family looks like. Members of each life stage bring unique perspectives and gifts to the others.

The call to raise the next generation of Christians isn't just for parents – it belongs to the whole church family. Singles, aunts and uncles, couples without children, and grandparents play a powerful role by investing time, wisdom, prayer, and presence into young people's lives; building the kingdom has always been a shared responsibility. No matter your life stage, you can still make kingdom goals that intentionally build into the next generation – because shaping future disciples of Jesus is all of our responsibility, not just a parental assignment. On page 3, you'll see possible family stages and one example (of infinite possibilities) of a kingdom-minded goal.

Stage	Example of a personal focus for this stage
Single without children	Be a good son/daughter/brother/sister/aunt/uncle and create space for rich community with both singles and families around me.
Married without children	Create space for rich community with singles and families. Honor my spouse so that my marriage will be a true picture of God's heart toward the church.
Families with young children	Faithfully model the life of a disciple in my home so my children have a foundation for understanding real and healthy Christianity. Invite others into our home so that I can disciple with the time and resources I have access to.
Families with pre-teen and teen children	Survive this season with our sanity intact and loving our children the way Christ would. Offer transparency to those we disciple so they also feel free to be vulnerable in discipleship.
Young adult children	I want to be trusted by my child so I can be an ear to listen, a shoulder to lean on, or an advice-giver. I want to have the discernment to know when each is appropriate.
Grandparents/Empty Nesters	I want to be faithful to the Lord with my time, talents, and resources. I want to love my family and community – giving them a good example of 'finishing the race' well.

The purpose of the Family Framework isn't to dictate how you disciple your family through the season of life you are in. The purpose of the Framework is to help you see how the church can come alongside you in the process and to provide you with ideas and resources to help you seek Christlikeness and discipleship no matter what stage of life your family is in. Vista will prioritize family discipleship – especially our kids – not as projects, but as our future. As culture grows louder and more invasive, we will come alongside parents with practical tools and a supportive community to help children grow grounded, resilient, and formed by Jesus rather than pressure and noise. As our children grow, we seek to support families in each stage by creating space for community and providing tools and other resources dedicated to the issues you're currently facing. We want to center prayer, community, and lived experience as the primary offerings, but will continue to offer other avenues to equip you as the spiritual leaders of your family unit.

PARENTS

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is a framework in and of itself for how seriously we should be taking discipleship in our homes.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."

Moses tells us that we should dedicate our whole being to the love of God, but also that we should build rhythms and reminders metaphorically and physically to keep the Lord before our eyes and our children's eyes always. We should plan and make habits out of learning and teaching about the Lord. In other words, our children should see, feel, and know that God is our priority every day of the week. He isn't an afterthought. He isn't a Sunday tradition. He is Lord and North Star (Proverbs 3:5-6) every day.

Consider Our BLESS10 Model and How It Can Translate To Parenting:

BEGIN WITH PRAYER

- Pray for and with your children every day. (Do you know how valuable and fruitful your prayers are? Are you teaching your children that it is valuable or just a routine tradition that we need to check off our to-do list?)

LISTEN

- Pay attention to what is important to your children. They won't always know how to verbalize their deepest emotions, but patient, active listening can go a long way in understanding where their hearts are. Even complaining is really communication about hardships and possible anxieties.

ENGAGE/EAT

- Make the most of the "ordinary" time you get to spend together. Even a simple tradition (undertaken with care, not duty) while having dinner can help your children see you want to know them better. Try "high/low", "peak/pit", or "What was one good thing about your day and one not so good thing about your day?" Let this time feed your bodies and your relationships.

SERVE

- What is parenthood if not continual service? Strive to serve your family the way Christ calls us to serve – with a heart of gladness. Or as Romans 12:10 puts it, “Outdo one another in showing honor.”

SHARE YOUR STORY

- Talk to your children about how God has met you and is meeting you. Be honest about the places where you long for Him to meet you. One reason young people walk away from their faith is because they aren't taught to wrestle with it. They often think if they don't have 'perfect' faith, then they don't have it at all. Instead, you can model the truth found in James 1:2-4. *“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness, and **let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.**”*

THE FOUR P'S

How you see, interact with, and depend on the Lord will be the biggest catalyst for your child's early and lasting faith. You reflect the face of the Lord to everyone you come in contact with, but to no one more than your children. The strength of your relationship with God matters to your children and your children's faith.

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Look for these symbols throughout to find ways to implement these practices.

1. PATTERN

« **Be the visible example of what following Christ looks like. Model a grace-filled life of discipleship. »»**

Examples: Revisit your family mission statement at the beginning of each month and discuss your ideas to live into it. Read your Bible visibly in your home, apologize when you make mistakes, join a small group and be faithful in prioritizing that time for spiritual health and growth. Share with your family when you have meaningful encounters with or learn something interesting/encouraging about the Lord.

***Question: What patterns are we setting / modeling about how a Christ-follower should live? What aspects would we like to add or change?**

2. PRIORITIZE ✦

«« Set aside intentional, consistent time together to train them up in the ways of Jesus. Your children will witness the way you live, but they also need to hear explicitly what your behaviors and choices mean. Do you have regular conversations about faith and give space and privacy for your children to ask hard questions about their faith? »»

Examples: Pray together as you drive to school, schedule regular ‘daddy daughter’ or ‘mother son’ dates, read a short Bible passage before bed and discuss what it means, have a weekly family devotional time, or memorize a Bible verse each month that you can quiz one another on. Children in KC are always working on a memory verse. That could be a great place to start.

**Question: What particular rhythms of connection have been most fruitful for our family? How do I make individual opportunities for connection and discipleship with each member of my family?*

3. PIVOT ↔

«« Turn everyday situations into spiritual conversations. Remember what it says in Deuteronomy 6. If God is the most important thing to us, that will be proven by the way we perceive and speak about our lives. Our homes should be a safe place to reflect, question, and connect through conversations about the Lord. Take every opportunity to show your children who God is, what He is like, and what that means for our lives. »»

Examples: If they are having a hard time with a friend – offer to pray with them. If they are celebrating, teach them to thank God for being the giver of every good gift (James 1:17). If they’re feeling hurt or frustrated, grieve and empathize with them, then remind them that Jesus has conquered the grave! If they’ve made a mistake, remind them that Jesus has died for their sins and that you won’t hold it against them any more than Christ will.

**Question: What open doors to talk about the Lord did I take advantage of this week?*

4. PRAISE ♥

«« Celebrate milestones and moments of growth. In his book *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster states that celebration is central to all the spiritual disciplines. We may be able to begin hard journeys by sheer force of will, but we won’t keep at them long without infusions of joy and hope. “Women endure childbirth because the joy of motherhood lies on the other side. Young married couples struggle through the first difficult years of adjustment because they value the insurance of a long life together. Parents hold steady through the teen years, knowing that their children will emerge at the other end human once again,” Foster explains. Celebrating our children’s spiritual milestones shows that we see them, we are proud of them, and it gives them emotional fuel to continue a journey that the world is making increasingly difficult. »»

Examples: Have a family celebration dinner. Have your child's loved ones write letters affirming them. Pray a blessing over them. Create a family celebration tradition, and invite your community to join.

****Question: Have we looked for ways to consistently affirm and celebrate our child's interest and obedience to God?***

◆ **FAMILY MISSION STATEMENT** ◆

In the same way a company relies on its mission statement to keep it grounded in its purpose and headed toward the correct destination, a mission statement can help a family do the same. You can argue that the Bible is our mission statement – full of commands, imperatives, stories, and examples to help us lead fruitful lives. You'd be correct! Your mission statement should be based on Scripture, personalized to your family and short enough to bring to mind often.

A family mission statement should:

- Be crafted with care through prayer
- Be short enough to memorize and recall when needed
- Take into consideration your family's passions and resources
- Point you toward the horizon of our ultimate goal, the most important commandments

"The most important is, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 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. The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" Mark 12:29-31

Your mission statement can take whatever form it needs to fulfill its purpose for your family, and creating it together can be a powerful moment of unity and clarity. When every family member contributes, you can each feel ownership of the values and purpose your family wants to live by. This is how the mission statement moves from 'a nice idea' to a shared commitment to follow Jesus together. If you need help getting started, consider using the Five Ws method.

WHO? - Declare your identity and/or those whom you want to reach.

WHAT? - Clarify your mission, goals, and/or purpose.

WHERE? - Identify your mission field.

WHEN? - Is there a deadline or timeframe associated with your mission?

WHY? - What is the driving force behind your family's mission? The 'why' can keep you energized when following your purpose is difficult. Is there a particular Scripture your family rallies behind? If so, that's a great place to start!

BRAINSTORM

What are issues that my family feels strongly about?

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What gifts, resources, or talents do we have that can be useful?

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Family Mission Statement Examples:

1. Our family exists to love God, love people, and follow Jesus together. We seek to grow in faith, serve others, and reflect Christ in our words, actions, and relationships. We will do this by looking for opportunities to love and serve in our family, work, classrooms, neighborhood, and church.
2. Our family follows Jesus by loving our neighbors, serving those in need, sharing what we have, and using our lives to bring hope to those who are hurting.
3. As for our family, we will serve the Lord. We will love God wholeheartedly, love people sacrificially, pursue truth, practice forgiveness, and use our lives to point others to Jesus.
4. Our family is committed to following Jesus, growing in God's Word, praying together, serving others, and helping one another become the people God created us to be. We will love when it's hard, support when it's confusing, and forgive when it's necessary.

Write Your Own Family Mission Statement:

♥ SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES ♥

Milestones worth celebrating come in many forms. The easiest to recognize are milestone events like child dedications or baptisms. Vista can come alongside you to celebrate these special moments in the life of faith that buoy families and individuals. These aren't saving acts, only faith in Christ can do that (Ephesians 2:8; Colossians 2:12). However, they are important declarations about the intended direction of travel in one's life. We want to honor those declarations corporately, and so we celebrate them several times a year in our Sunday Worship Gatherings. Here are a few examples of milestone events your family might celebrate:

- *Child Dedication* - a public commitment to raise your children to know and follow Jesus. In turn, your community commits to support you in that mission.
- *Profession of Faith* - A personal declaration that Jesus is Lord and Savior, marking an individual's decision to trust and follow Him.
- *Baptism* - An outward expression of inward faith in Christ, symbolizing new life, forgiveness, and identification with Jesus' death and resurrection.
- *Rite of Passage* - A meaningful moment recognizing spiritual growth and increasing responsibility, affirming a young person's maturing faith and identity in Christ. (e.g., you take a trip with your children when they turn 13 to celebrate the new phase of life they are entering and connect on what that will mean for their relationship with God.)
- *High School Graduation* - A transition milestone celebrating God's faithfulness through childhood and commissioning the graduate to live boldly for Christ in the next season of life.

There are relational milestones that are incredibly important in the life of a believer. These kinds of events don't usually get church-wide attention, but they are the behaviors that show our children's faith becoming both personal and tangible to them. Here are a few examples of relational milestones your family might celebrate intentionally with your children:

- Your child shares his/her faith with a non-believing friend
- Your child forgives a friend who hurt them
- Your child encourages someone using Scripture
- Your child stands up for their faith in a tough situation
- Your child begins to serve in the church on their own
- Your child begins to mentor a younger child
- Your child goes on their first mission trip

Finally, there are understanding milestones. These aren't events as much as questions that every believer must have a biblical answer for to ensure a strong foundation for a Christian life. Answering these questions isn't a one-time event, but something we do repeatedly throughout life – each time with deeper and deeper understanding. The questions aren't linear or necessarily understood in any order.

Kid's Community (children from birth to grade 5), *Jolt* (middle school youth), and *Surge* (high school youth) aim to be more than in-church childcare or a fun club for kids. These programs seek to provide meaningful and intentional interactions with God's Word in developmentally appropriate and attractive ways. We aren't trying to be your children's primary disciplers. We get to interact with them a mere fraction of the time that you do. **We want to be a tool in your family's discipleship plan.** We get about an hour a week (for regular attenders) to help your children think about God and the Bible in new ways. To have the most lasting, foundational impact on your children's walks with God, we are incorporating 16 milestones from *The Absolute Basics of the Christian Faith* by Phil Tallon into our curriculum. Our hope is to use these questions to give each classroom a theological focus to understand God and the Bible through. Each classroom will interact with the Bible and its lessons holistically, but will also reiterate the focus of their particular classroom with their lesson each week. When your children 'graduate' from each room, they will have been steeped in a foundational truth of our faith. They will be able to articulate personal answers to the questions in their classrooms and eventually all 16 questions. *Kids Community* and *Jolt/Surge* exist to give our youth a safe and fun place to interact with God's truth so they can know Him all the more. If they grasp these truths, we will have done our job.

Theological Focus	Age/ Class Range
Who is God?	Infants/Walkers
What is God like?	Infants/Walkers
What did God make?	Preschool
Why is there evil in the world?	Preschool
Who is Jesus Christ?	K-1st
Why did the Son of God become human?	K-1st

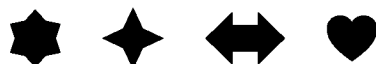
What is salvation?	2nd- 3rd
What is required for salvation?	2nd- 3rd
What are the benefits of salvation?	4th- 5th
What happens when we live out our salvation in Christ?	4th- 5th
Who is the Holy Spirit?	Jolt/ Surge
What does the Holy Spirit do?	Jolt/ Surge
What is the church?	Jolt/ Surge
What are the church's sacraments?	Jolt/ Surge
What is my place in God's story of hope?	Jolt/ Surge
How will I choose to live?	Jolt/ Surge

Make a habit of celebrating your child well and often. Invite others to join in. Doing so will help them see how much God delights in them and is proud of each small step they take toward Him.

“Each day of our lives, we make deposits in the memory banks of our children.”

– Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHO IS ON YOUR TEAM?



We were never meant to walk alone. From the time of Jesus' death, believers knew how important living as a community was to fulfilling Christ's mission for our lives.

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.... And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. - Acts 2: 38-39, 42-44

Parenting is no different. There is so much value in surrounding our children with believers who will love them, be a safe haven for them, challenge them, and challenge us. It does, indeed, take a village to raise a child. Another way to phrase that is, "It takes a community to raise a Christian." We are called to work together to raise disciples that love Christ! This interconnectedness is what makes us a family.

Who is intentionally helping you care for your children? Who knows them, prays for them regularly, and is a safe place for them? Who celebrates their milestones? Who **would** love your children in this way if they knew you needed and wanted their help? Who is naturally situated already, but hasn't been intentionally tapped as a pivotal part of your child's team?

CONSIDER:

- Family
- Friends
- Teachers
- Coaches
- Vista staff
- Church leaders

BRAINSTORM - WHO IS ON THE TEAM?

Who loves my child well and models the kind of faith I hope they develop?

Who has walked through challenges my child may face in the future?

Who naturally connects with my child's personality and interests?

Who has influence in a season or stage I'm less familiar with?

Who is a young person (slightly older/ a season ahead) that my child can look up to?

BRAINSTORM - HOW DO I HELP GROW & UTILIZE THE TEAM?

How can I create a safe space for them to influence my child more?

What specific strengths will I pray God develops in my child through this relationship (confidence, leadership, compassion, resilience, faith)?

How can I clearly communicate to them that I value their influence?

What small step could I take this month to deepen that relationship?

RESOURCES

You don't have to figure all this out on your own! Sign up for our weekly [Re]Connect email and pay attention as we roll out events and opportunities designed to equip and support you in many of the areas highlighted in our Family Framework.

There are also many trusted books and tools that can help you grow in confidence as you lead your family spiritually. To make this easier, we've gathered several recommended resources in the **Family Framework section of the Vista library**, where you can find helpful books on parenting, discipleship, and building a Christ-centered home.

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU:

◆ **PATTERN (MODEL THE LIFE OF A DISCIPLE)**

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

Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family by Paul David Tripp

Praying the Bible by Donald S. Whitney

Shepherding a Child's Heart by Ted Tripp

Total Forgiveness by R.T. Kendall

What Is The Gospel? by Greg Gilbert

Your Next 30 Days by Dean Fulks

◆ **PRIORITIZE (HAVE REGULAR, INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP TIME & HABITS)**

A Neglected Grace: Family Worship in the Christian Home by Jason Helopoulos

The Biggest Story: How the Snake Crusher Brings Us Back to the Garden by Kevin DeYoung

Family Discipleship that Works by Brian Dembowczyk

Family Worship by Donald S. Whitney

Habits of the Household- Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms by Justin Early

The Jesus Storybook Bible by Sally Lloyd-Jones

Raising Good Humans by Hunter Clarke-Fields

Shepherding a Child's Heart by Tedd Tripp

Show Them Jesus by Jack Klumpenhouwer

Timeless Advice for Parents of Young Children by Grandmothers of the Hanna Perkins Center

The Whole-Brain Child by Daniel Siegel & Tina Bryson

The New City Catechism by Timothy Keller

Family Discipleship Guide by Village Church (www.thevillagechurch.net)

Seeds Family Worship (www.seedsfamilyworship.com)

↔ PIVOT (MAKE THE MOST OF EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS TO FURTHER DISCIPLESHIP)

Capable: How to Teach Your Kids the Strengths, Skills, & Strategies to Build Resilience by

Sissy Goff & David Thomas

Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know by Wayne Grudem

Every Young Man's Battle by Stephen Arberturn & Fred Stoeker

Everyday Talk by John A. Younts

Instructing A Child's Heart by Ted Tripp

Know Why You Believe by Paul E. Little

Parenting With Scripture by Kara Durbin

Phase Guides by ReThink Group (www.phaseguides.com)

Plugged In Parenting by Bob Waliszewski

Preparing Your Daughter For Every Young Woman's Battle by Shannon Ethridge

The Reason For God by Timothy Keller

Teachable Moments by Marybeth Hicks

GENERAL PODCASTS FOR PARENTS

The Christian Parenting Podcast

Faith in Kids Podcast

Family Discipleship Podcast

Why Is Gen-Z Suffering from So Many Mental Health Issues? (Sissy Goff & David Thomas on
Theology in the Raw)

RESOURCES FOR PARENTING ADULT CHILDREN

Adulting Together by Edythe Lynora

Doing Life With Your Adult Children by Jim Burns

Grandparenting with Grace by Larry E. McCall

Love, Pray, Listen: Parenting Your Wayward Adult Kids with Joy by Mary Demuth

Parenting Adult Children by Diane Pope

VISTA FAMILY FRAMEWORK

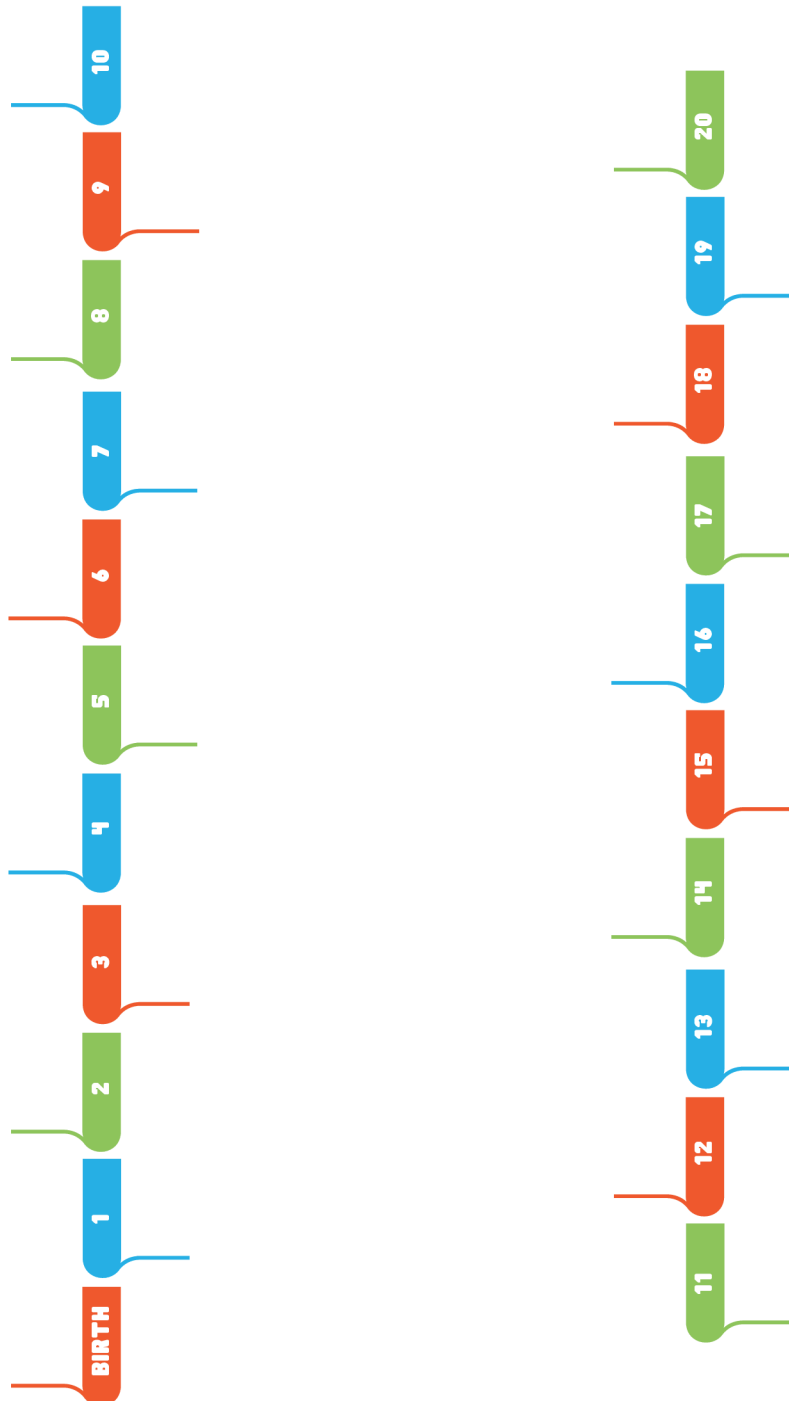


CHILD WORKSHEET

CHILD'S NAME: _____

AGE: _____

MILESTONE MAP: Here's a place to record your child's milestones and think about those that are coming up for them. This could give you an idea of what to be praying for, what conversations to be leading with your child, and what kind of support you may need from your community at this stage. (*see *Spiritual Development Milestones* on page 10 for ideas.)



Use this space to reflect on how you've celebrated milestones in the past and dream about how you might make them special in the future.

WHO IS ON YOUR TEAM?

Consider the needs of your child at this stage and the questions posed in the family framework.

Use this space to reflect on:

- Your child's current team
- Who/ what experience is missing on their team
- A plan to strengthen your team

THE FOUR P'S

Use these questions as a guide for reflection by taking time to journal your responses—either in a notebook or on a few sheets of paper you can revisit over time. Don't feel pressure to tackle everything at once. Instead, choose one area to focus on for the next month, prayerfully reflect on what you hope to see grow, and make a simple, realistic plan to put into action. After a few weeks, evaluate what's working and then move on to the next area. At a steady, intentional pace, these small steps can lead to meaningful and lasting change in your family.

PATTERN ★

*What does my everyday life teach my child about what following Jesus actually looks like?
Where is my faith visible to my child—and where is it mostly private?
How do I respond to stress, conflict, or failure, and what does that show my child about God?
What patterns do I want my child to imitate—and what needs to change?
If my child copies my spiritual life, where will that lead them?*

PRIORITIZE ✦

*Is discipleship something that “fits in” or something we plan for?
What rhythms have been most meaningful for connecting spiritually as a family?
Am I creating intentional one-on-one space with each of my children?
How often do we have real conversations about faith—not just surface-level moments?
What would it look like to be more consistent in this season?*

PIVOT ↔

*How comfortable am I talking about God in real-time situations?
Do my children feel safe asking hard or honest questions about faith?
How do I respond when my child struggles, fails, or celebrates—do I connect it back to God?
What situations in my child's life right now could open the door for deeper spiritual conversations?
Am I helping my child see God as present and active in their daily life?*

PRAISE ♥

*Am I noticing and affirming my child's spiritual growth, even in small ways?
What milestones have we celebrated—and which ones have we missed?
Do my children feel seen and encouraged in their faith journey?
Who else can be invited in to affirm and celebrate my child?
What traditions can we build that will mark these moments over time?*