

Milestone Three: Preparing for Adolescence

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Ministry Department: Children

Target Audience: Third - fifth grade parents

Family Event: Weekend Away

Class Description: Our Milestone Three class helps parents prepare to lead their child through the upcoming spiritual, emotional, physical and social changes that come with the teen years. We provide guidance on how and when to have "The Talk" with your child.

Time Requirement: 1.5-2 Hours

Training Support Required: Classroom with computer connection and display

Handouts:

"The Sex Talk" by Axis.org
Family Celebration Road Trip
List of spiritual gifts and verses to memorize
How to Pray for Your Children
Resource List
Family Freedom Ministry Booklet

Resources:

Passport to Purity by Dennis & Barbara Rainey
The Ultimate Guy's Body Book by Dr. Walt Larimore
The Ultimate Girls' Body Book by Dr. Walt Larimore and Dr. Amyaryllis Sanchez Wohlever

Middle School: The Inside Story by Cynthia Tobias and Sue Acuna

Good Pictures Bad Pictures: Porn Proofing Today's Young Kids by Kristen A. Jensen and Gail Poyner

Milestone Three is divided into 5 main topics:

Introduction

Main Topics

- Spiritual Changes
- Emotional Changes
- Physical Changes
- Social Changes
- "The Talk"

Conclusion

Introduction

Introduce instructors and pray for the class.

Welcome to Milestone Three – Preparing for Adolescence

Our Role: Our role at Kingsland is to equip you to prepare yourself and your child for the journey ahead. You are your child's number one teacher and fan and you will walk closely beside them.

Your Role: Review Role of Primary Faith Trainer.

3 Key Tasks:

Share Faith Talks

Capture God Moments

Prepare For and Celebrate Milestones

Discuss / Review Legacy Path (Use handout to explain each one)

1. Family Dedication
2. Salvation & Baptism
3. Preparing for Adolescence
4. Purity for Life
5. Preparing for Adulthood
6. High School Graduation
7. Biblical Marriage

Who is ready to walk through adolescence again? The good news is that we can prepare ourselves and our kids to make the journey much more pleasant.

Begin with some video clips to lighten the mood.

Video Clips from "The Middle" Season 1 Episode 11 "The Jeans" –disc 2

start to 1:24 "don't understand me at all"

4:19 thru 6:15 (apologize for bad word) –Sue in closet

14:40 thru 16:20

Preparing your child for adolescence includes more than “The Talk.” There are things you can do before your child reaches adolescence that will make the transition go more smoothly. Often parents are concerned that they will overwhelm their pre-teen or encourage curiosity if they jump the gun. A greater concern is that you wait and someone else will beat you to it. Doctors report puberty starting at age 9 among some girls and boys being exposed to porn at the same age.

Spend time with them getting a sense of where they are developmentally. You will most likely be surprised at what they already know. Prime opportunity falls between 9 and 12. We suggest having the talk at the end of 4th grade, although some kids may need to have it sooner, but very definitely before the start of junior high.

We need to do a little review of basic parenting before we are ready for adolescence.

Know your Mandate – What is your job as a parent?

- Teach your child to follow Jesus
- Keep your child safe
- Show love and affection
- Educate your child
- Keep your child healthy

Know what your job is NOT:

- To be their entertainment committee
- To give them everything they want
- To compete with other parents
- To be their friend over being their parent

Your most important job is to teach your child to love the Lord and keep their focus on Him.

Mark 12:30 – Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”

Pre-teens are dealing with fear and anxiety. We can help with that:

- Listen
- Create a safe environment – let them know they can ask questions without being judged or shut out. DO NOT FREAK OUT!
- Be authentic
- Be involved – involve them in decision making. Teach them to make decisions. Walk them through how you make decisions.
- Let them know they are not alone
 - Deuteronomy 31:6 – “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you or forsake you”
 - Psalm 118:6 – “The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid”

- Eat meals together and really talk together – if you listen to the boring things they tell you about, they are much more likely to tell you the important things later. Pay attention to how you say things; “If your homework isn’t done by dinner you are not playing video games today.” Or “If you get your homework done by dinner you get an evening of video game time!”
- Be available!!!

Spiritual Changes

The most important change to take place is spiritual. Children are beginning the process of owning their own faith. This change is often unnoticed because it is all internal – which makes it rough on kids. I Corinthians 13:11 says, “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.”

Many people never “grow up” spiritually – they are handed a belief system and a list of do’s and don’ts and sent on their way. Some people are saved but never grow in their spiritual maturity. We don’t want our kids to have a weak spiritual life, so we need to encourage them to grow and be transformed. Romans 12:2 - Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Too often parents freak out when their kids question their faith or express doubt. Our kids are trying to define who they are. Asking questions is a GOOD thing – that means they are thinking about their faith. I’d much rather they think about it than ignore it. Love this quote – “God doesn’t have grandchildren – only sons and daughters.” Each of our children must have his or her own relationship with the Lord – they can’t hang on our coattails.

As our children move toward adulthood, they must be able to defend their faith. Ephesians 4:14-15 says, “so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.” Isn’t that what we want for our kids? They need to ask questions. Home should be a safe place to express doubts and find answers.

Here are some key points as they enter these years:

- Know who you are in Christ
- Learn from God’s Word, the Bible
- Keep the communication lines open – PRAY – but also keep the lines open between your child and you – keep talking about spiritual things – mention things you are learning as you study – allow your child to teach you something!

- Get connected with other believers – It’s HUGE to be plugged in to a Christian group
- Don’t let doubt get you down

Every believer doubts some aspect of God at some point. Talk about that with your child. NO question is too big for God – question Him, He can handle it!

Help them learn to research Biblical questions. Visit a Christian bookstore and ask for resources. It’s okay for your kids to know you have questions and doubts about your faith sometimes. Search for answers together.

Emotional Changes

Mood swings are coming. Physical and hormonal changes will bring them. It’s your job to teach your pre-teen how to handle them. It’s very similar to the extremes of a 2-year-old. Opinions can also change drastically.

God esteem vs self-esteem – society pushes self-esteem.

Philippians 4:13 – “I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

LISTEN to your kids. They spend most of their time being told what to do and being lectured to. They desperately want to be listened to, understood and taken seriously. It’s tough though, because they don’t understand themselves.

Here are some other volatile ingredients:

- Intense need for peer acceptance
- Intense concern for looking dumb, clumsy or different from the herd
- Struggle with self-confidence or feelings of inferiority
- A limitless capacity for creative (often obscene) insults, put downs and jokes directed at everyone – even kids that are wonderful at church and home, can become very cruel in other settings

Help your child learn something well – sport, instrument, skill, school subject, hobby. The key is that they feel like they have an area in which to excel.

Focus on spiritual gifts

Validate your child when they utilize these gifts. (see list)

Physical Changes

Make sure kids realize we all grow at different speeds and start at different times – and that’s okay.

REVIEW RESOURCES – “The Ultimate Guys/Girls Body Book” by Larimore

Start pointing out changes in older kids your child knows.

Start reading resources NOW so you will be prepared to answer questions.

You want to make sure your child knows the basics of sex before junior high – because they WILL hear about it from other kids. They may even hear it from church kids!!!

Use anatomically correct words – start using them before you talk about sex to lessen the level of discomfort. The closer kids get to adolescence, the more uncomfortable they get – so start early.

There’s not a lot you can do to prepare kids for physical changes, except keep them informed.

Here are some subjects you may not think to address:

- Body odor
- How much sleep does a teen need? – 9 hours!!!! – this time in life is second only to infancy in growth rate – MUST SLEEP
- Body image – focus on God’s word - Psalm 139:14 “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

Social Changes

While we can’t do a lot of prep to make physical changes easier, we can do some good work in the social area to lessen stress.

As your child prepares to enter junior high, here are some things to make the transition easier:

- Visit the school while in elementary school – go to basketball games, plays, etc – check their web site for info
- Start paying attention to Student Ministry events and talk to your child about them

- Look through yearbooks from your child's junior high (find a friend with older kids) – your child can see some of the fun things junior high has to offer

Have a dating plan in your mind BEFORE junior high – Kids “go out.” You’ll want to think this through and talk to your child before they are faced with it at school.

Decision Making – Junior high offers opportunities for your child to start making their own decisions. (club choices, athletics, who to sit with at lunch, etc) Help your child be prepared. Explain to your child that over the next decade, decision making will move to them. Your role should start moving from authoritarian to coach. You should begin discussing the “whys” of your decisions so that your child is able to make their own thoughtful decisions.

Friends – They will change a lot through the early teen years. How do you choose them? Talk to your kids about qualities they want in their friends. We should try to exhibit those in ourselves as well. Be the friend you want to have. Create opportunities for your child to mingle with new possible friends. Easier to invite a “friend” to an event than to invite them alone. (Craft parties, movie days, etc)

Proverbs 13:20 – “He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.”

Should you still expect your pre-teen to use good manners? YES! Just because they are going through so many changes, doesn’t mean they get a pass on the niceties of society.

Social Media – Be aware of what is going on – you may need to suspend rights for a time. Be cautious, because kids know how to get around you! You should have their passwords and your child should know that you will look from time to time.

Be sure your kids know you can spot check their devices at any time. Kids need and WANT our help navigating the rough waters.

The Talk

Watch some videos to reduce anxiety.

Skit Guys – Fatherhood [You Tube] point 1.32 – 1.45

Skit Guys Video – The Sex Talk all of it

NOTE: This would be great to watch with your child at the beginning of the weekend.

The authors of “Middle School: The Inside Story say, “Parents who are calm and matter of fact about the subject of sexuality, or who have honestly answered questions long before middle school, will have

an easier time. But a parent who springs it on a middle schooler out of the blue can expect some reluctance and awkwardness from both parties.”

Many parents are scared to talk to their kids about sex because they aren't sure what they believe themselves. Start now praying and reading so you know where you stand on all issues.

Here are some to consider:

- Is sexual purity possible outside of marriage?
- Homosexuality
- How much of your history are you willing to tell – or is it healthy to tell?
- Is it okay to date non-believers?
- Masturbation

Start discussions about what is and isn't appropriate conversations for school and friends. Let boys know there are things you don't talk about or say in front of girls, and vice versa.

Here are a few things to do now to make the conversations go more smoothly.

- Provide a safe and loving environment
- Create an atmosphere of honesty, mutual trust and respect
- Allow age appropriate independence and assertiveness
- Listen to your child and make sure no subject is off limits
- Teach responsibility for belongings and household chores
- Teach importance of setting limits – tell kids WHY you won't let them do certain things
- Teach the importance of thinking before acting
- Teach delayed gratification

The ability to talk openly about problems is one of the most important aspects of the parent child relationship. You should always be developing this relationship. Open communication takes time, persistence and understanding. Figure out when your child is most open. You need time ALONE with each child. Mealtimes, storytelling, playing games, outings, celebrations, car rides are all important. Your child should know you are available.

We suggest setting aside a special weekend alone with the child to really get the conversations going. Do something your child enjoys. Make sure there is plenty of car time or alone time to discuss and reflect. Then be sure to plan recurring conversations throughout the rest of your child's teen years. The conversation should continue and change as your child matures and faces different situations and circumstances. Rules that don't make sense to them in 5th grade suddenly make sense when they are 16.

When you have the sex talk, start talking about dating and purity. Even in 8th grade when kids take the pledge for purity, many still don't understand how difficult this commitment will be as they get older. The conversations need to keep happening. This is not a one-shot event.

Kingsland suggests you use the Passport to Purity set. You will want to listen to all the CD's ahead of time on your own. You should plan for an extended time away alone with your child, or plan for a set schedule to cover all topics. All families are different. It's not so important HOW the talks happen, but that they do happen.

Conclusion

These adolescent years will be full of problems to solve and moments of insanity. You will need to guide, monitor and sometimes intervene to keep the "world" away from your teen. Trust but verify.

The junior high years are amazing - you can still see the child they were and the adult they will become - often all in the same minute!

Sometimes what irritates us the most will be one of their most valuable traits as an adult. They are practicing on you!

Learn some memory verses together. Some suggested verses are on the handout.

But through all this, take the time to notice and appreciate the great things going on with your teen – and let them know that you see it.

How and when these qualities will show up varies:

- Energy and enthusiasm
- Idealism
- Concern for the needs of others – often accompanied by a willingness to offer help in ways that may seem risky or unrealistic
- A desire for meaningful relationships
- A sense of humor that can be witty and insightful
- A concern for fairness and justice
- An interest in other cultures and countries
- Development of new skills in athletics, the arts, writing and speaking, use of tools, etc
- Curiosity – not only about how, but *why*
- Willingness to commit to worthwhile causes
- Ability (and attention span) to appreciate sophisticated music, drama, films, art work

- A deep desire for a relationship with God and a willingness to make a lifelong commitment to serve Him

This is the time when kids START to take ownership of their relationship with the Lord. This should be your primary goal. School is not the end all. Grades will not make all the difference in the world. Our goal is to raise kids to become responsible adults that love the Lord with all their heart, with all their mind, with all their strength and with all their might, and to serve him all the days of their life.

You can never tell them you love them too much.