

SECOND BIRTHDAY

BLESSING YOUR CHILD

EASTVIEW FAMILY RESOURCES



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THIS YEAR AT A GLANCE...

Everyone needs to experience the unconditional love and acceptance from their parents. Those who don't receive it can spend later years trying to fill the void missed at home. Those who did receive the blessings have a tremendous advantage in life. This booklet will guide you in this simple, yet powerful, practice of saying a blessing over your child. You'll find examples of how to bless them throughout the normal rhythms of your day.

HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL FIND INSIDE:

- **Letter from Jason Smith**, Next Gen Pastor at Eastview.
- **A Letter To Your Child** A guide to writing a letter to your child with memories and affirmations
- **Blessing Your Child Overview** The biblical concept of blessing your child and how to get started.
- **Daily Rhythm Blessings** Ideas for prayers at morning time, bath time, snuggle time, meal time and bedtime.
- **Bedtime Blessings** Ideas specifically for your bedtime routine.
- **This Year's Parenting Plan Checklist** A summary of this year's focus with an easy checklist.
- **Marriage Plan** For married parents, follow this simple plan to keep your family healthy beginning with your marriage.
- **Digital Resources** The Parent Cue App and RightNowMedia are two digital resources we highly recommend.



As you celebrate your child's 2nd birthday, we want to provide this booklet to help you as you guide your child on a spiritual journey to know, love and follow Jesus. This year's focus is: BLESSING YOUR CHILD.

We believe that God designed the home to be the primary place for discipleship in a child's life. It is our privilege to come alongside you as you raise your child in the ways of the Lord.

If you are new to these parenting plans, let me explain what this booklet is. We offer this Family Ministry Map as a guide to help you raise your child one step at a time — with one annual focus each year. This certainly isn't the only parenting plan you could follow, but over the 18 years of your child's life, you will have followed a fairly comprehensive plan to raise your child in the faith.

These booklets are not intended to cover all there is to know about each topic. Sometimes parents feel overwhelmed with the responsibility of raising their child to know the Lord, and aren't sure where to start. So we have created simple steps to get you started.

As a reminder, during the time that your child is in our early childhood programs here at church, we will be focusing on:

KNOWING GOD AND HIS LOVE

KNOWING JESUS AND HIS STORY

MEETING GOD'S FAMILY

We also begin a journey in the 2's classroom where your child will alternate a year in the OT and then a year in the New Testament up through 5th grade, learning God's big story of love and rescue. We are committed to being a faithful partner to you and your family. If you have anything that we can pray for specifically, or if you have any questions, send me an email or call 309-451-5000.

Jason Smith,
Next Gen Pastor
jsmith@eastview.church



MY LETTER TO YOU FOR YOUR 2ND BIRTHDAY

Each year throughout the parenting plan, take time to write your child a letter. Below are some ideas of things to include that will speak life and love into your child, as well as give them an invaluable collection of insights into their upbringing and a storyline of memories to be cherished for the rest of their lives. You can write them all in a journal or write each letter as a separate piece of paper.

1. Things I've loved about you this year...
2. Important memories from this past year...
3. Some of my favorite time with you is when we...
4. My favorite book to read to you is...
5. My favorite song to sing to you is...
6. Your favorite toy this year is...
7. Things that make you smile and laugh...
8. Your favorite food this year...
9. I've been praying about this for you this year...
10. I've been praying about this for me as a parent this year...
11. What I want for you in life...
12. A scripture verse I have picked out for you this year...

**Include a photo of your family with the letter to give a year by year collection of memories all in one place.
Each year after giving your child the letter, get it back and keep them all somewhere safe.
You will give them all to your child in the 18th year for LAUNCH.**



SECOND BIRTHDAY: BLESSING YOUR CHILD

WHAT IS THE BLESSING? This is a powerful tool with which we communicate acceptance and genuine commitment. The word comes from the ancient practice of weighing coins on a scale to determine value. Blessing someone *adds value* to his or her life. In scripture the word bless or blessing is used almost 700 times. The Bible shows us that our God is a God of blessing. We receive that blessing from our Heavenly Father and have the wonderful opportunity to pass it on.

Our hope is that this year's focus on blessing your child will develop a lifelong practice. We not only want to describe a blessing, but also give you some ideas for blessing your child during the natural rhythms of your day. Everyone needs to experience unconditional love and acceptance from their parents. Those who didn't receive it can spend later years trying to fill the void missed at home. Those who did receive the blessings have a tremendous advantage in life.

WHEN SHOULD YOU GIVE IT? You can take advantage of special occasions and scheduled events to give a blessing in an intentional manner as well as capture informal, more spontaneous moments. You might want to start a nightly routine of blessing before bedtime or as you drop your child off at school or daycare.

WHAT SHOULD I SAY? You can begin to bless your child with simple phrases about how special they are, always grounding these affirmations in Jesus. For example, as your child is lying in bed, gently rub his head and tell him "God made you so special. He made you very kind. I saw you singing to your baby sister. You are a very important big brother and I know how much you love her. You will take good care of your sister her whole life." Just simple affirmations that point to the good things you see in him, along with a gentle touch, will make a big impression on who they become.

"Every child you encounter is a divine appointment. With each one you have the power and opportunity to build the child up or tear the child down. A life can be launched with as little as a single phrase, an uplifting word, or an act of kindness. The spirit of a little child is a lot like wet cement. When a child is young, it takes little effort to make an impression that can last a lifetime." Wess Stafford (Too Small To Ignore, WaterBrook 2006).

Every child needs to experience a blessing from his or her parents. This guide can help you begin giving the kind of blessings that lift a child up for a lifetime.

FIVE ELEMENTS OF BLESSING

There are five basic elements of a blessing that, combined, have tremendous impact. While blessings range from promises to affirmations, this acrostic can help you have an idea of the helpful ways to bless your child.

B **ECOMMITTED:** The blessing is not a fleeting moment or mere symbolic event. It includes an active, long-term commitment to the child's well-being by accepting responsibility to help them become all God intends.

L **OVINGLY TOUCH:** The power of a hug or placing your hand on your child while affirming him or her creates an important physical connection and communicates warmth, acceptance and relational health.

E **XPRESS VALUE:** We add to a child's life when we use words that attach high value to them as a person. A child whose parents spoke truth and life into them as they've grown up, creating an identity in Christ in them, will have a security to help combat the lies of our enemy as they get older.

S **EE POTENTIAL:** Parents have a front row seat to see a child's natural strengths and foresee possibilities for their future. Giving a blessing includes picturing a special future and cheering them toward achieving their potential.

S **AY IT:** An effective blessing must be put into words whether spoken, written or both. Beyond simply being present, words of affirmation are necessary for the child to know he or she is appreciated and accepted.





DAILY PRAYERS FOR BLESSINGS:

One way to bless your child is to speak scripture over them, asking God to bless their lives as you go throughout the normal activities of your day. Below are some ideas to get you started.

MORNING BLESSING - Psalm 143:8

*In the morning let me hear about your faithful love, because I've put my trust in you.
Show me the way I should live, because I trust you with my life.*

Bless my child to know your faithful love, to trust you and to live for you.

BATH TIME BLESSING - 1st Corinthians 6:11

*Some of you used to do those things. But your sins were washed away. You were made holy. You were made right with God.
All of this was done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was also done by the Spirit of our God.*

Bless my child and wash his sins, make him holy and keep him pure.

TRAVEL TIME BLESSING - Joshua 1:9

*This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged.
For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.*

Bless my child with courage and strength and the faith to know you are always with him.

MEAL TIME BLESSING - Psalm 107:8-9

*Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men,
for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.*

Bless my child with daily bread and a grateful heart.

BEDTIME BLESSING - Psalm 4:8

In peace I will lie down and sleep. Lord, you alone keep me safe.

Bless my child with sweet sleep in the peace from knowing You're here.

BEDTIME BLESSINGS

One of the practices we strongly recommend as you raise your child is to **put your child to bed instead of sending him to bed**. Bedtime is a natural rhythm of every day. Starting early in life and maintaining this practice even through their teenage years will provide you with some irreplaceable quality time over the years.

There is something very powerful about your child having some unrushed time at the end of their day to talk, pray, read stories, talk about their day, or ask important questions that they only think about while their day quiets down. You might consider having a bedtime routine that gets them to bed 15 minutes earlier than you normally would, just to create that special time.

SUGGESTED BEDTIME FLOW:

- Sit beside them as they lay in bed.
- Gently rub her forehead or hand and look into her eyes.
- Tell her something you love about her or something good you saw her do today.
- Say a blessing over her and kiss her goodnight.

BEDTIME BLESSING VERSES: You might consider having a verse from the Bible that you use as a blessing over your child as they go to bed. Perhaps you could print the verse out and place it in a frame in their room to help you remember the words. Here are a couple of suggestions:

*“May the Lord bless you and take good care of you.
May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you.
May the Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.”*

Numbers 6:24-26

*“The Lord your God is with you;
He is mighty to save.
He will take great delight in you;
He will quiet your fears with his love.
He will rejoice over you with singing.”*

Zephaniah 3:17

“Every child, in every home, deserves to have at least ONE person in their life who is CRAZY about them. The Blessing is a biblical tool that can help YOU communicate unconditional love as an unshakable foundation for HEALTH and wholeness – without spoiling or giving false praise to a child that crumbles as they face the challenges and hurts in real-life.”

- Dr. John Trent

To learn more excellent resources on how to bless your child, visit Dr. John Trent’s website below and click on “The Blessing.”

www.strongfamilies.com



THIS YEAR'S PARENTING PLAN SUMMARY/CHECKLIST

WEEKS TO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION: 832 and counting
PHASE PARENTING PHRASE: EMBRACE your child's physical needs

*"May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you.
May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace."*

Numbers 6:24-26

- Read the contents of this booklet and the Phase Summary (tri-fold) that comes with this booklet.
- Write a letter to my child.
- Ask God to bless my child throughout the day with the blessing ideas given in this booklet.
- Begin a bedtime routine that includes me speaking a blessing over my child.
- Participate in The Blessing Challenge with Dr. John Trent and Dr. Tony Wheeler at www.theblessing.com.
- Follow This Year's Marriage Plan below. *(We know not every parent is married. We don't mean to offend by including this segment.)*

THIS YEAR'S MARRIAGE PLAN

Each year we want to encourage you to make a plan to keep your marriage healthy. One of the most important gifts you'll give to your child is the love you give to your spouse. When mom and dad love each other and demonstrate the traits of a healthy (NOT PERFECT!) marriage, it not only sets a good example of a godly marriage, but gives them a greater sense of security and well-being. Andy Stanley in [The Principle of the Path](#) writes "We don't drift to good places." (Thomas Nelson, 2008). Good marriages require intentionality. Use the plan below to make an intentional effort in your marriage this year. Read [The Best Us](#) by Ted Lowe (©MarriedPeople 2016) for a full explanation of Have Serious Fun! Love God First; Respect and Love; Practice Your Promise.

Have Serious Fun! Date Night Scheduling: Grab your calendars and mark at least TWO date nights for each month and PROTECT those dates. Remember that you were boyfriend and girlfriend before you were dad and mom, and have fun together! No family administration discussions! For extra fun, watch for sponsored "Date Nights" by Eastview's Marriage Ministry.

Love God First - Faith Practices 101: Research finds that couples who pray together at least twice a week have a divorce rate of less than 1% (HomePointe). Commit to praying as a couple at least twice a week. Plan which worship service the two of you will attend together each week – try to avoid "dividing and conquering" in order to volunteer.

Love and Respect - Write an Annual Letter: Write a letter to your spouse for your anniversary this year, much like the one in this packet that you will write to your child. Write a letter of memories from this past year, affirmations, prayers and promises to each other.

Practice Your Promise - Personal Growth: Set a "secret goal" to grow as a spouse, such as "listening better," "praising her in public," or "initiating romance." Write it down and seal it in an envelope. When you receive next year's packet, open the envelope and assess your progress.

Invest in Your Marriage: Join an email blog like [lesandleslie.com](#), choose one book to read this year, or choose a small group study on marriage. The Eastview Marriage Ministry and RightNow Media have many helpful events and resources.




EASTVIEW RESOURCES

WE BELIEVE THAT EVERY PARENT
WANTS TO BE A GOOD PARENT.
WE CAN HELP YOU TAKE THE NEXT STEP.

STEP-BY-STEP PLAN: As a part of our Eastview Church Family, we never want you to feel like you have to parent alone. We want to come alongside you in your parenting journey and provide resources and relationships that can help you along the way. While this is certainly not the ONLY Christian parenting plan out there, and probably not even the best one, it is a way to raise your children in the faith over the years, with one specific focus a year. These plans are available in three ways:

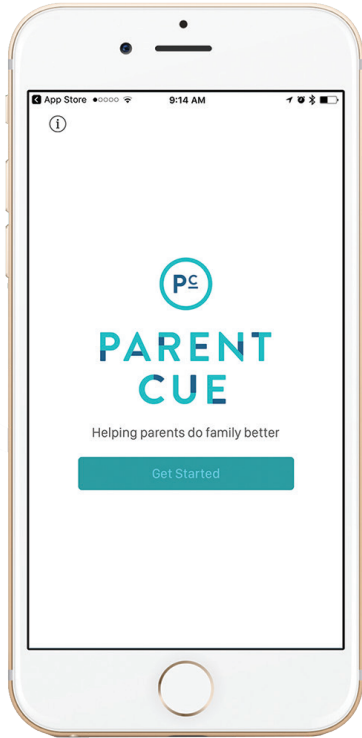
1. Visit eastviewresources.com/familyresources to select and download these booklets digitally.
2. Stop by the Family Resource Wall at the Normal or Bloomington Campuses and pick up a physical copy anytime.
3. Text #parentplan to 309.808.6002 to register your family to receive the booklets each year on your children's birthdays. If you are a regular attender, the registration will be quick as we will match your family records with your phone number - no data entry required.

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER: You will obviously have specific needs along the way that we do not cover in these booklets. You might have a child with special needs, or your child might be dealing with a specific issue, or you might need more creative ideas for family times together... whatever it is, we will do our best to offer helpful resources. Stop by our Family Resource Center on the lower level of the atrium on the Normal Campus. We have a rotating inventory of resources that give you some quick advice on a variety of topics with recommended resources and next steps to take at Eastview. We highlight various books and resources to help with different aspects and seasons of parenting and marriage.



MEMBER CARE: There might be certain seasons where you have specific needs and just need a little extra help. We understand and have been there too. Because of this, we have different areas where we can assist our members needs:

- **CARE APPOINTMENTS:** We know that connecting to others for prayer and encouragement is a necessary part of our spiritual formation, especially in times of need. Care Appointments are scheduled times we have set aside to meet with you for pastoral care. We would like to hear your story, pray with you, and offer guidance on your next steps. To sign up for a care appointment visit www.eastview.church/membercare.
- **COUNSELING REFERRALS:** We want to help people connect to Christian Counselors when professional services are needed for healing and growth. For information on counselors in our area contact: Sara Thompson sthompson@eastview.church or 309.451.5057.
- **PARENTING APPOINTMENTS:** Sometimes professional clinical counselling is not an option or necessary and you just want to get some pastoral counseling based on biblical principles, email Jason Smith at jsmith@eastview.church to make an appointment with him or a specific age group pastor. (emphasis that this is biblical pastoral counselling NOT clinical professional counselling)
- **CARE GROUP:** Eastview Care Groups range from support groups for parents with kids with special needs, to parents of children who identify as LGBTQ+, to men's sexual integrity groups, to divorce care to single moms groups and more. For a list of current available care groups, visit eastview.church/ministries/care. For specific information, contact Jason Sniff at jsniff@eastview.church.
- **THE FAMILY ROOM:** Open on Sundays before, after and during services, our family room is a place to connect with caring staff and volunteers for prayer and encouragement. Available at the Normal and Bloomington Campuses.



DOWNLOAD THE PARENT CUE APP

As a parent, some of the most important things you do for your child don't happen in a single day. You make small deposits in their life week after week - over time. That's why the Parent Cue App gives weekly cues to help you make the most of the time you spend with your kid or teenager. This app is brought to us by The ReThink Group, producers of the Phase Summaries that come with these booklets, as well as the curriculum we use for our 4th & 5th Grade Ministry at ECC.



Easy encouragements to help your child start their day.



Ideas for meaningful talks on the way to soccer practice.



Conversation starters while grabbing drive thru tacos or sitting around the table.



Great reminders for ways to end the day on a great note.



Timely help for those moments that take you by surprise.

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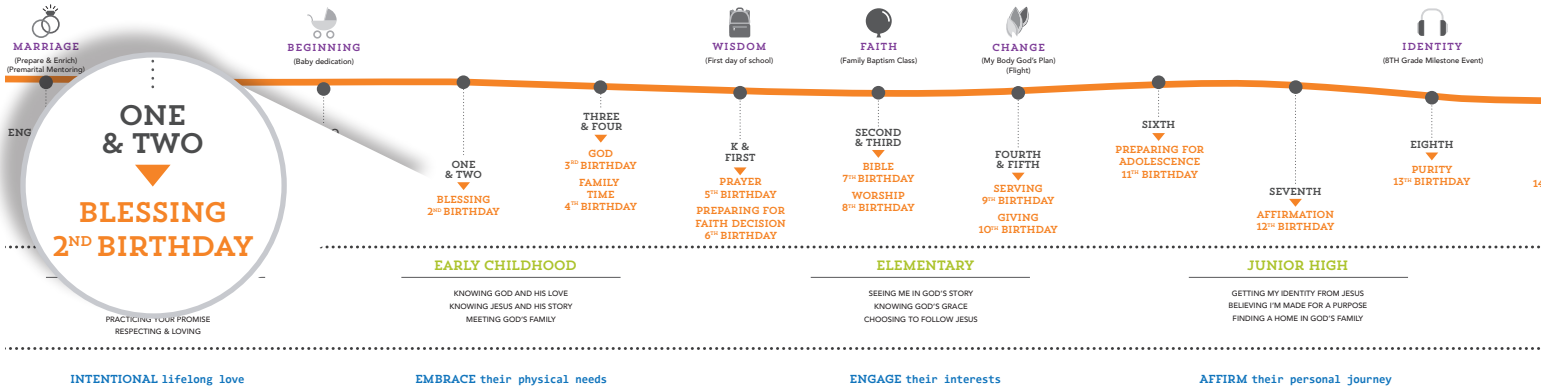
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CHECK OUT THE KIDS' SECTION AND VIDEOS ON PARENTING AND MARRIAGE!

EASTVIEW FAMILY RESOURCES

FAMILY MINISTRY MAP

RAISING CHILDREN



AN INTENTIONAL PLAN FOR YOUR FAMILY. STEP BY STEP PARENTING FROM BIRTH THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL.

The Eastview Family Ministry Map is a bird's eye view of our strategy for helping families thrive. From the formation of families as young couples date, through the child rearing years, to the empty nest, we have a plan that families can follow to build strong marriages and pass on a legacy of faith to the next generation—one step at a time. For the full map, visit our Family Resource Center in the lower level atrium next to the bookstore.

SIGN UP FOR OUR PARENTING PLAN: TEXT "#PARENTPLAN" TO 309.808.6002

Each year on your child's birthday we will provide you with a new booklet to help you focus on one aspect of your child's life and spiritual formation. Each booklet contains helpful information on developmental milestones, simple ideas for passing on your faith in everyday rhythms, as well as practical ways to speak into their lives. Every parent wants to be a good parent. We can help you with the next step.