

# FOURTH BIRTHDAY

FAMILY TIME

## EASTVIEW FAMILY RESOURCES



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## THIS YEAR AT A GLANCE...

**W**hen your child reaches about four years old, it is a great time to establish a pattern of including fun family times in your schedule to foster communication, laughter and faith formation. We want to challenge you to take this year to establish an intentional Family Time in your family's rhythm. This booklet will give you ideas of the importance of a "family time" and some easy ways to get some started with your family.

### 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
- **"Family Time" Overview** The "WHY" and "HOW" of Family Time.
- **Family Time Ideas** Creative ideas to make your family time fun and meaningful.
- **Idea Resources** No need to "bake the pie from scratch," with these helpful resources full of ready-to-go ideas.
- **This Year's Parenting Plan Checklist** A summary of this year's focus with an easy checklist.
- **Marriage Plan** 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.



**A**ccording to our records, you are celebrating a birthday in your family this month! As you celebrate your child's birth, 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: FAMILY TIME.

At Eastview, 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. 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. We also include recommended resources to

help you in your parenting journey. Visit our Family Resource Center and Eastview Bookstore where our staff and volunteers can help you with other topics and resources.

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 are committed to being a faithful partner to you and your family. Our staff is praying for your child by name this month. 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](mailto:jsmith@eastview.church)

# MY LETTER TO YOU FOR YOUR 4TH BIRTHDAY

**E**ach 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. Our favorite book to read together is...
5. Our favorite song to sing together 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.**

## FOURTH BIRTHDAY: FAMILY TIME

**W**hen your child reaches about four years old, it is a great time to establish a pattern of including fun family times in your schedule to foster communication, laughter and faith formation. We want to challenge you to take this year to establish an intentional Family Time in your family's rhythm.

While it shouldn't replace the unscheduled, everyday type of teaching reflected in our 3rd Birthday booklet, it is important to have a consistent routine of creating intentional moments that will help your family deepen relationships and have faith discussions. Regularly scheduled family time activities are a great way to make that happen.

**PICK YOUR TIME:** For some families this might be a particular night of the week after dinner. For another family it might be after Saturday morning breakfast. Decide what works for your unique schedule and then protect that time. You might need to say "no" to some good things to make family times a priority. We suggest scheduling a family time experience weekly, but no less than twice per month. Setting and keeping a regular schedule will show commitment and value to all involved. This booklet will help you with ideas on what you can do to make the most of this time.

**PLAN WHAT YOU'LL TEACH:** As you plan this time, find resources to help make your family times a great experience. We have listed several recommended resources in this booklet to help you get started. Keeping your preparation simple is a very good idea until you get into the rhythm of these family times. Don't forget that the Bible is the most important resource God has given us to instill truth in the hearts and minds of our children, and can easily be the only resource you use for your time.

**MAKE IT FUN:** Children are more likely to embrace your beliefs and values if they enjoy time with you. That's why family fun times are a great context for effective faith formation. Start the time out with something fun for your family like a favorite treat or a game everyone likes. Keep things loose and informal. Avoid becoming overly serious, rigid or stressed while leading family times. It's okay for kids to be silly and it's important to fill your home with laughter. The first few times, everybody might end up in time out, including Dad! But don't get discouraged and frustrated. With some effort and commitment, this could be a tradition that becomes so cherished that it lasts in your family well into your children's adulthood.

**GETTING STARTED:** Protect a day and time and let your child place a sticker on the family calendar to help build anticipation. Choose a family theme song that you can crank on the stereo to gather everyone together each time. Spend a little time singing, silly dancing, swinging the kids, etc. to get everyone in the mood for the best part of the week! If you have older kids, let them help pick the songs, games, etc. Use one of the ideas in this packet as a family lesson time to teach a spiritual truth to them. Remember this rule of thumb throughout their life when preparing for Family Night. They will have about one minute of attention span for each year of their life (so plan four minutes for a four year old). Keep your lessons simple, but if you have older kids, it's okay if your four year old hears his siblings talking through faith issues, even if they don't understand it all.

#### **IDEAS FOR FUN INTENTIONAL TIMES:**

- Choose a family verse that you want to be an identifying mark for your family. Pick a prominent place in the house and put the verse up for everyone to see often. You could paint the verse on the wall, print it out and put it on the fridge, or many verses can be purchased as a decoration at stores like Hobby Lobby.



- Turn Movie Night into Family Night. Make some popcorn and watch the film together. Afterwards have a “faith talk” about the choices of characters and other aspects of the story that catch your attention. Check out [movenightchat.com](http://movenightchat.com) for some suggested movies.
- Share with your child something that God has been or is teaching you. Be real and vulnerable.
- Cook a meal together each week and use the time for sharing and talking.
- Daily Family Time: ask each member of the family to share his or her “high” and “low” of the day at dinner or bedtime.
- Create a graffiti wall in your home where everyone can write scripture verses, sketches and quotes that are special to them. This might become the most treasured decoration in the home.





# FAMILY NIGHT IDEAS

**S**ometimes the hardest part about having a family time is not doing it, but coming up with what you will do for it. While you can get as creative as you want, it doesn't take a lot of prep to have a meaningful and memorable time together. Some weeks might be simple and others might be a real memory-maker! The following resources can help take the stress out of that part of spending faith-building time as a family.

**EASTVIEW KIDS FAMILY NIGHT IDEAS:** Each week, the Eastview Kids staff offer a family activity that goes along with the lesson that the kids cover on Sundays. These are available in the Family Ministry Newsletter, which comes right to your inbox. Sign up to receive it at [eastview.church/eastviewfamilynews](http://eastview.church/eastviewfamilynews).

**SUNDAY POST GAME:** Right after church, while everything is fresh on everyone's mind, have a family discussion over lunch or dinner about what everyone learned at church. This helps your kids process what they've learned and keeps you involved as their parent in what they are learning at church.

**FAMILY NIGHTS TOOL CHEST by Jim Weidmann and Kurt Bruner:** There are several books under this series that cover things like Basic Christian Beliefs and Holidays.

**FAMILY TIME ACTIVITIES by Kurt Weaver:** Learn about the danger of anger, what's special about a peanut, and what the Bible says about forgiveness and "disappearing sins." This book also includes a great lesson on teaching kids how to pray.

**[Christianmomthoughts.com/25-family-devotional-time-ideas](http://Christianmomthoughts.com/25-family-devotional-time-ideas):** This free online resource has various family night ideas.

**STAIRWAY CHALLENGE:** Gather all of your kids at the bottom of the steps. Stand at the top and give them this challenge. Tell them they need to get to you at the top of the stairs without touching the stairs (or the handrails if you have them). If they can, you will take them out for ice cream cones. They, of course, will not be able to do it. So, one at a time, go down and pick them up and carry them up to you. Talk about how you represent God in heaven and that there is no way that we can get to heaven on our own. Just like you came down from the top of the stairs to take the kids to the top, Jesus came down to die for our sins so that we can go to heaven someday. (see a sample of this on RightNow Media) Take a moment to read John 3:16, pray together, thank God for our savior Jesus, and then go get that ice cream anyway!

**[BUBBLES, BALLOONS, & CHOCOLATE FAMILY TIME ACTIVITIES FOR PRESCHOOLERS](#) by Kirk Weaver:** Twenty lessons for your preschool age children.

## **52 CREATIVE FAMILY TIME EXPERIENCES** by Timothy

**Smith:** This book is for families with preschoolers to teens and gives ideas for your family night all year.

**COVERT OPS:** Get the family all dressed in dark clothes. Maybe even throw on some black face paint. Have fun with this part. Prepare a box of goodies/supplies for a family in need. Wait until it gets dark. Sneak over to their house and knock on the door and run! Hide down the street and try to watch the family find the unexpected blessing.

You should tie a helium balloon to the box in case they only look out the door and don't look down to see the box you left. You can get several nights from this one idea, changing it slightly to notes of encouragement or flowers for someone who needs to be cheered up; an already prepped dinner for someone in your small group who's really busy; a donation for someone's mission trip, etc.

End the night by reading Matthew 6:1-4 together while having a fun snack in your get-away vehicle.

## **TABLE TALK**

JK JONES • JIM PROBST • JASON SNIFF • JASON SMITH

Table Talk is two-in-one resource for your small group and your family. After studying together in your small group, you are ready to have a family time with your kids. Written by Eastview pastors, this book includes nine studies about the dinner stories in the book of Luke. Complete small group studies with guides for a family night later in the week. Available in the Eastview Bookstore, this fun diner-themed series will provide you with over two months of weekly family night ideas broken into appetizers, main course, kids' menus and carry out sections.





# THIS YEAR'S PARENTING PLAN SUMMARY/CHECKLIST

**WEEKS TO GRADUATION: 728 and counting**  
**PHASE PARENTING PHRASE: EMBRACE your child's physical needs**

**Implement times in your family's rhythm to create space for conversation, laughter and faith formation.  
Family Times provide structure to something that could go undone without this type of intentionality.  
MAKE IT FUN • KEEP IT SIMPLE • KEEP IT GOING.**

- Read the contents of this booklet and the Phase Summary (green tri-fold) that comes with this booklet.
- Write a letter to my child.
- Plan 2-4 family times a month and guard that time.
- Check out the recommended resources for ideas and have something prepared for each family time.
- Create a plan to have fun, teach your children, and foster faith formation in a group as a family.
- 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

**E**ach 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. Each date night, you swing by the church to receive your plans for the evening.

**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 – don't "divide and conquer" 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 or save it on your phone. When you receive next year's packet, open the envelope or file 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 Family Resource Center, 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.

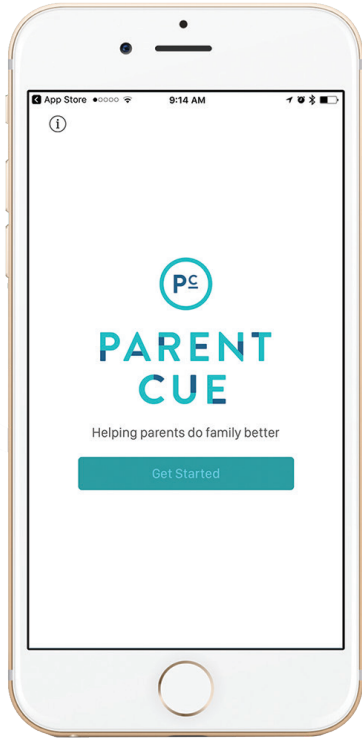
**STEP-BY-STEP PLAN:** As a part of our Eastview Church Family, we never want you to feel like you have to parent alone. We want to come alongside you in your parenting journey and provide resources and relationships that can help you along the way. While this is certainly not the ONLY Christian parenting 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.

**FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER & EASTVIEW BOOKSTORE:** However, you will 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. We can point you to great organizations like Focus on the Family ([focusonthefamily.com](http://focusonthefamily.com)) and others that give expert advice on all things family. We have topical cards 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. Our Bookstore is also a wonderful resource for us at Eastview. Sure, you can buy books on Amazon, but at our bookstore, all of the books have been recommended by Eastview Staff and leaders and our helpful staff and volunteers are able to help you find the just right resource.



**MEMBER CARE:** At Eastview, we believe that the care of our members is very important. Because of this, we have different areas where we can assist our members needs, whether that be counseling referrals, help needs and family journeys.

- **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 [eastview.church/membercare](http://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](mailto:sthompson@eastview.church) or 309.451.5057.
- **HELPS MINISTRY:** We depend on our small groups to help support one another and take care of one another's needs. For our church members that are not already in a small group, we can utilize our helps ministry team. This team can assist with meals, and limited transportation to our Sunday services during times of illness, hospitalization, new baby, or other life interruptions. For more information, please contact Nicki Green at [ngreen@eastview.church](mailto:ngreen@eastview.church) or 309.451.5033.
- **CARE GROUP:** Eastview Care Groups range from support groups for parents with kids with autism to men's sexual integrity groups to divorce care to single moms groups and more. We keep a list of them at the Family Resource Center, or you can learn more about them at [www.eastview.church/caregroups](http://www.eastview.church/caregroups). For specific information, contact Jason Sniff at [jsniff@eastview.church](mailto: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.



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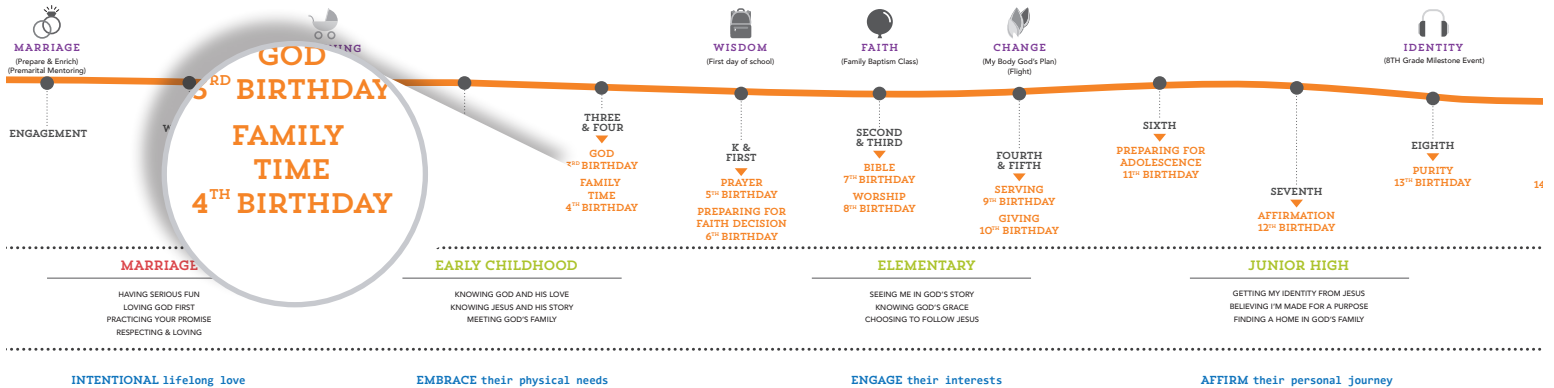
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**CHECK OUT THE KIDS' SECTION AND VIDEOS ON PARENTING AND MARRIAGE!**

# 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.