



# FIFTEENTH BIRTHDAY

## COMMUNICATION

### EASTVIEW FAMILY RESOURCES

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## THIS YEAR AT A GLANCE...

Over the next few years, it may seem like your teenager wants less and less to do with you – maybe it already does. But keeping a clear line of communication open with your child is essential to having a healthy relationship. You still have some critical years of parenting before you launch your young adult into the world. So, how do you keep a healthy level of communication with your teenager?

### 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.
- **“COMMUNICATION” Overview** Helpful advice on having healthy communication with your teen.
- **Communication Resources** Recommended resources for this year’s focus.
- **Communication Guidelines** Practical ways to communicate with your child including discipline.
- **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, Tough Guys & Drama Queens, and RightNowMedia.



**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: COMMUNICATON.

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 Parenting Plan 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 student ministry programs here at church, we will be focusing on:

MAKING MY FAITH A PRIORITY

STEPPING INTO MATURITY

MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

PREPARING FOR MY FUTURE

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 15TH 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 could collect them 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. Your favorite type of music is...
5. Your favorite hobbies are...
6. Things that make you laugh...
7. Your favorite things to do with your friends...
8. I am impressed when you...
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. Something I hope you learned this year is...
12. A bible verse I have picked out for you is...

**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 back all of the letters to your child in the 18th year for LAUNCH.**

## FIFTEENTH BIRTHDAY: COMMUNICATION

Over the next few years, it may seem like your teenager wants less and less to do with you – maybe it already does. But keeping a clear line of communication open with your child is essential to having a healthy relationship. You still have some critical years of parenting before you launch your young adult into the world. So, how do you keep a healthy level of communication with your teenager?

Surprisingly, it might have more to do with you than with your child. Sometimes your child will barely grunt out a one-word answer to you, and other times they may run on and on about something they are really excited about. They may vacillate between dramatic outbursts and monk-like withdrawal. That's when it's a critical time to remember that we are the adults. They are a hot mess of emotional, physical, mental and spiritual change. We cannot expect them to react and communicate in an adult manner all the time. They might be getting deeper voices, driving with a permit, learning foreign languages and looking more like you in your wedding picture, but they are still not adults...yet.

This year we want to focus on building, maintaining or rebuilding good communication with your child as you parent your teenager over these next few years.

**MAKE SURE YOU KNOW YOUR CHILD:** Sure, they've grown up around you, but it takes intentional effort to know your child as they get older. "Remember, if you don't know who you are talking to, you can't really expect them to listen."\* Take time to read and understand the phase summary included in this packet. Read other developmental material. When it seems like your son can't settle down, just learning the fact that boys do not get a steady drip of testosterone all day long, but rather bursts occasionally throughout the day, can help you deal more effectively with them. Or, to know that your daughter will likely process decisions out loud will help you not freak out when it sounds like they've decided to do something they're only considering. Become a student of your child's development... it will help. Also, get to know your child's world – check out their music, movies, social media, books, and favorite celebrities. Go to school events and offer for them to invite their friends over for an eating frenzy, pedicures or a Superbowl party. Don't overdo your interaction, but take these opportunities to observe your child's life. "Kids don't learn from people who don't like them. And they will never feel like you like them, if you don't know them."

*\* (quotes from It's Just a Phase, So Don't Miss It, Orange, 2015)*

**BE SAFE!** You want your child to open up to you and let you know what's going on in their life. So make sure that when they attempt to do so, they feel safe. According to our phase summary, you see that this age tends to think like a philosopher. They typically "learn best through open debate, multiple perspectives, and applied reasoning." They actually might really care about what you think, but they want to know that you actually really care about what they think too.

Realize that they are transitioning from a time where they are told what to do a majority of the time, to where they need to make those decisions for themselves. Don't expect that they can process as well as you, who, by the way, has 20 years more experience making decisions (which if we're honest, haven't all been very good ones). They need us to be a safe place to think through their questions, their options, their perspectives and to sort out all of the voices around them giving them all different answers.

By being a safe person to talk to, you stand a better chance at being someone they come to for advice in life. If we freak out on them, dismiss their youthfulness as foolishness (two separate things), or give them an incessant stream of answers rather than helping them process their questions (or even really listening to their questions), they will begin to find other people to confide in and process life with.

Realize that you will not be the only voice they invite into their life for counsel, so when you get invited in, make sure you seize the opportunity for positive interaction. Use the tips on the blue cards in this packet to create opportunities for communication and for tips on what to say and not say.



# COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR TEEN

**L**ISTENING AND SPEAKING When talking with your teen, keep a few things in mind:

- Don't do all the talking.
- When they do talk, listen. Really listen. Don't be thinking ahead and miss what they are communicating.
- If they say something unwise, don't overreact. Let them finish so that they've been heard.
- Ask lots of questions. If they say something you disagree with, or if they are blowing up about something, keep asking "tell me more."
- Ask questions, without a judging tone, that will help them process things they haven't considered yet.
- Do not belittle, speak in a patronizing or dismissive tone, or attack your child for their opinions... that will forfeit your chance to be heard and help them grow towards a wiser perspective or conclusion.
- When they are done speaking, give them a synopsis of what they said and ask them if you understand them correctly (without any judgement). Seek first to understand, THEN to be understood. Ask them to correct anything you didn't quite understand.

**COMMUNICATING DISCIPLINE:** Though your child is getting older, you will still be in situations where you need to discipline your child for poor choices and behavior. It can be easy, as

parents, to compound a problem by poorly communicating the discipline that will take place.

- Make sure you have made your expectations clear before you discipline. If it is a first offense, and it is possible they didn't know what they were doing was against your rules, invest time in teaching them. You might still discipline them, but make sure you have clarified the issue for the next time your child is in that situation. Proverbs 12:15-16
- Do not discipline in anger. You need to cool off before you issue a punishment that you later will want to take away. If you feel yourself losing your cool, just say "I'm angry and I'm going to take some time to think it over, but I will need to discipline you for this." Then go calm down. You'll think clearer and be ready to communicate any life lessons your child needs to learn. Proverbs 14:17,29
- Discipline is love, so love them enough to train them to live a godly life. Eventually, though it may take a long time, they will appreciate that you taught them right from wrong. Proverbs 13:24
- If your child points to YOUR choices in the past, don't let that distract you from doing the right thing with this situation. Own your mistakes/regrets and assert your authority as a parent. If it fits, use your mistakes to show them the natural consequences of bad decisions.

# HELPFUL RESOURCES ON COMMUNICATION

## [The 5 Love Languages of Teenagers](#) - By Gary Chapman

Gary explores the world in which teenagers live, explains their developmental changes, and gives tools to help you identify and appropriately communicate in your teen's love language. For more on the 5 Love Languages: [5lovelanguages.com](http://5lovelanguages.com)

Get practical tips for how to:

- Express love to your teen effectively
- Navigate the key issues in your teen's life, including anger and independence
- Set boundaries that are enforced with discipline and consequences
- Support and love your teen when he or she fails

## [Tough Guys & Drama Queens](#) - By Mark Gregston

*FREE online course with author is available - see the ad later in this booklet.*

This resource will not only help you be a more informed parent, but will also help you communicate in a more effective way with your teen. Mark is a veteran expert in working with teens. More resources are available on his website: [heartlightministries.org](http://heartlightministries.org). He has several resources for troubled teens as well.

## [Love & Respect in the Family and Mother & Son: The Respect Effect](#) - By Dr. Emerson Eggerichs

These two books teach us how to work towards having a home where the environment of love and respect foster better relationships and communication. Mother & Son is a book where Dr. Eggerichs expands upon a section in Love & Respect in the Family where moms are taught how respect is the key to their son's heart. Eggerichs teach us ways to avoid what they call "The Family Crazy Cycle" where parents react in an unloving way to disrespect and the kids react in a disrespectful way to unloving actions by parents. For more information on the Love & Respect concept for marriages and families, visit [loveandrespect.com](http://loveandrespect.com).

Watch the trailer for Mother & Son at [loveandrespect.info/mother-and-son-respect-effect](http://loveandrespect.info/mother-and-son-respect-effect).







# CONVERSATION IDEAS FOR YOUR TEEN

**K**EEP THE CONVERSATION GOING: Sometimes you don't have to come up with something to talk about with your child, you just need ideas on how to keep it going. Here are a few ideas from Positive Parenting Connection to keep your conversation from stalling out:

- What else can you tell me about that?
- No way! Can you tell me more?
- Seriously? Then what happened?
- Interesting. Is there more I can hear about?
- How do you feel about what happened?
- And this is making you think....?
- So, now what are you planning to do?
- I see. So what's your next step?
- So, then how did you feel about that?
- I like listening to you. Can we talk more another time?

**CONVERSATION STARTERS:** There are hundreds of conversation starter ideas online. Depending on the personality of your kids, you can find things to start conversations on everything from movies to faith to social issues to ice cream

flavors and more. Avoid making every moment alone with your child a heavy conversation, but take advantage of times that come up naturally to have a conversation, like driving to practice or waiting for your table at a restaurant. Turn off your devices and talk.

Google ideas for conversation starters and have some ready for when random opportunities pop up. You might even land on one or two that can become a daily routine for your family. For example, Highs and Lows. Have each person go around the dinner table and give a high and a low for that day. Instead of asking "how was your day?" and having them grunt out a one word answer, this causes them to reflect on the day and give you a peek into what pressures they might be facing and what makes them happy during the day.

Another idea is to ask them to tell you something they learned that day, which can range from something interesting in Chemistry class to a thought in their quiet time to the daily injury report for their favorite professional team. Just listen and see what they come up with. DON'T let anybody off the hook with these, but DO allow them to take their turn later if they are truly stumped.

**IMPORTANT TOPICS TO DISCUSS:** Some parents want to make sure they are having the right conversations with their kids while they are raising them. This is an important issue to address as a parent. You have the primary responsibility to raise your child with a Christian worldview, and yet sometimes you might be tempted to assume they'll learn what they need at school or at church. The most natural way to cover a lot of topics that are formational in the life of your child is to address things as they come up. Here are a few ideas on how to do that:

- Address topics in the news: "Did you hear about ...? What do you think about that?"
- Talk about things in their peers' lives: "How is Ellie handling her parents' divorce? What do you think about divorce?"
- Talk about what they are learning at small group, church or in their quiet times: "What did Matt preach on today? Why do you think we struggle with that?"
- Talk about controversial issues that come up. "I heard you tell Riley that Derek is taking a boy to Homecoming for his date. What do you think about same sex attraction?"
- Talk about dealing with adversity and set backs: "Our team at work didn't hit our deadline and my boss is furious. This is what our team is planning to do to navigate this problem. Do you have any advice?"

Deuteronomy 6 talks about how we need to parent during the normal rhythms of life. Pray daily for wisdom on how to teach

your child to be a godly young person as they come across complicated issues. Be patient with their lack of a mature viewpoint and let it serve as a reminder that though your child is looking more and more like an adult physically, they still need you to learn how to become a well-adjusted godly young adult. The reasoning and decision making part of their brain will be developing for another 10 years.

It is also important to be intentional about bringing up topics if they haven't come up on their own. There are a tremendous amount of faith-based topic ideas to cover with your teenager. Start with the resources in this packet, as well as Focus on the Family, Family Life, Axis and Mark Gregston.

Here are some topics to keep in mind: their faith journey (including doubts and questions), sin issues, dreams and their future, dating and sexuality, bullying, friends/relationships, finances, social justice, social media, poverty, suffering, media choices, drugs and alcohol, world missions, identity and self esteem, beauty and self image, violence, internet safety, emotional/mental health, friends with problems/issues, etc.

When our kids were younger, the emphasis was on teaching them WHAT to think. Now we need to teach them HOW to think - and how to think through biblical lenses. If at any point, you feel stuck, search for resources to help you set your child up with a solid foundation on any given topic. Eastview's staff is also here to help in any way we can.





# SAFEGUARDING YOUR HOME

## PROTECTING YOUR CHILD FROM ONLINE THREATS

**D**id you realize that your child is in the average age window that children are first exposed to pornographic content on the internet? If you haven't already, you need to make sure that every device in your family is protected. Having unprotected devices in your home would be as if our parents had left explicit magazines lying around the house, expecting us to make good choices.

### 3 STEPS TO PROTECTING YOUR CHILD ONLINE

- 1. Talk to your child about using their devices.** Discuss how they should never give out personal information or chat with strangers. Have an age-appropriate conversation about pornography. Stress how important it is to let you know if they come across inappropriate content. Make sure they know you are a safe person to talk to about what they've seen. For help in talking with kids about pornography, check out Good Pictures/Bad Pictures and Good Pictures/Bad Pictures Jr. by Kristen Jensen, M.A. and Gail Poyner, PhD. There are also great resources at [family.org](http://family.org) and [covenanteyes.com](http://covenanteyes.com).
- 2. Set boundaries for internet usage.** Require that all internet usage be done in a central area of the house where parents and other family members will be. Do not allow surfing while you are not home, including homework which typically requires a lot of need for google images.

Do not allow devices in a child's room - they should not need privacy to be on the internet.
- 3. Protect your devices with a content blocker and report generator.** There are several companies that provide these services/software. Focus on the Family partners with Net Nanny and Forcefield. Covenant Eyes is used by many families at Eastview. These programs will not only block content, but will also send accountability reports on everyone's usage in the family. You should also go into the settings of each device and determine the restrictions for that device, which is then protected by a 4 digit PIN.

Commit yourself to being intentional about being a gatekeeper for your child's heart and mind - no apologies. It will be impossible to protect them entirely, but these simple steps are a good start towards giving them a good shot at never knowing the dark world of a porn addiction.

**G**et answers to your toughest parenting questions in this new free course. Mark Gregston's "Tough Guys and Drama Queens" course is now available absolutely free!!

How you choose to navigate your child's teen years is one of the most important factors in how they learn and grow into adults, and your relationship with them now will set the course for years to come.

Whether you're in the middle of your teen's adolescent years and struggling with how to connect with them, or preparing for the years ahead, you're in the right place.

For almost 40 years, Heartlight Ministries has been passionate about guiding kids and parents through the turbulent teenage years. Tough Guys and Drama Queens has been a huge part of that mission, and we're thrilled to be able to offer it now, to you, as a free online course!

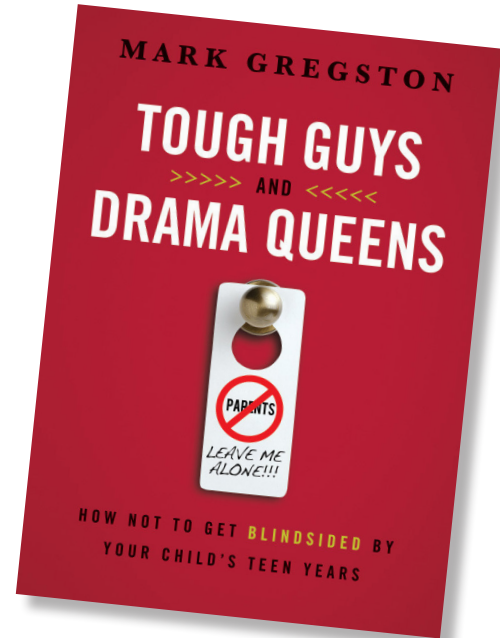
**This two-week course will reveal:**

- why traditional parenting techniques aren't as effective as they used to be
- the pressures teens face in today's culture
- how to build a stronger relationship with your teen throughout these years.

Enjoy Tough Guys and Drama Queens, and remember: God is the one truly in control of your teen's life. Your job is to help them through it.

**For more information go to:**

[facebook.com/parentingteens/posts/10154830885106892](https://facebook.com/parentingteens/posts/10154830885106892)



# THIS YEAR'S PARENTING PLAN SUMMARY/CHECKLIST

**WEEKS TO GRADUATION: 156 and counting**  
**PHASE PARENTING PHRASE: Mobilize Their Potential**

*“Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters:  
You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.”*

**James 1:19**

- Read the contents of this booklet and the tri-fold Phase Summary that comes with this booklet.
- Write a letter to my child.
- Challenge your child to continue the daily quiet time you challenged them to start last year.
- Take intentional time alone with your child to initiate conversations about life.
- Grow in your ability to communicate by using one of the recommended resources in this booklet.
- 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 booklet 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 booklet, 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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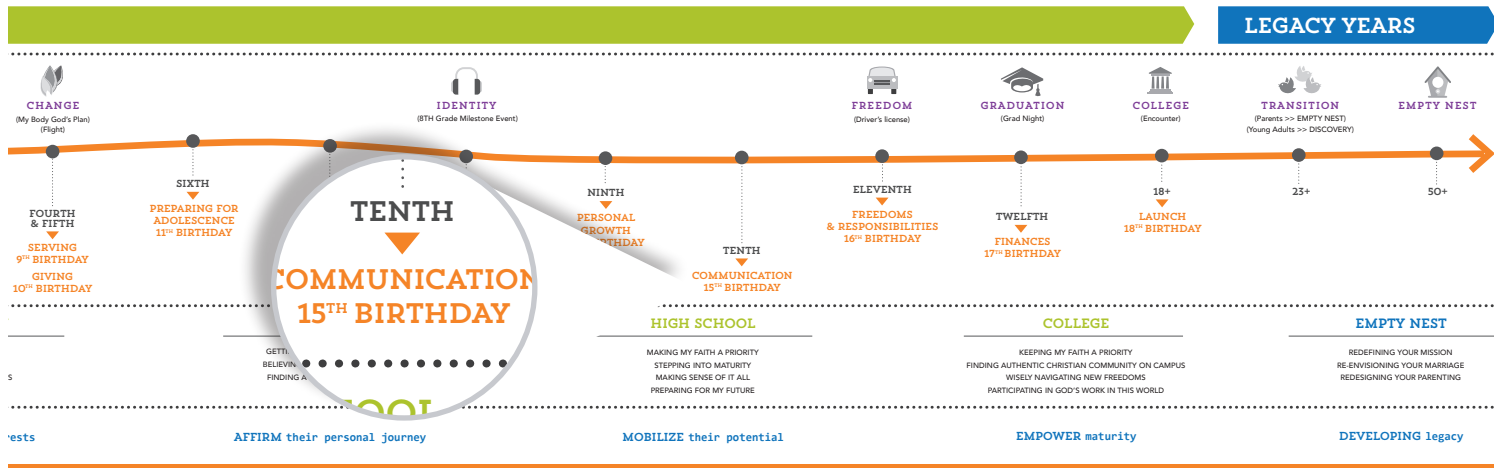
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# EASTVIEW FAMILY RESOURCES FAMILY MINISTRY MAP



## 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.