

SIXTEENTH BIRTHDAY

FREEDOMS & RESPONSIBILITIES

EASTVIEW FAMILY RESOURCES



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THIS YEAR AT A GLANCE...

As your 16 year old moves into a new season of life, with newfound freedoms that come with driving a car, we recognize this as a monumental milestone in their life journey. It signifies a shift in their life. This is a milestone that as parents, gives us a prime opportunity to speak deeply into the heart, soul and mind of our sixteen year old, inviting them into the adult world.

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.
- **“Freedoms and Responsibilities” Overview** Inviting your child into the next season.
- **Intentional Conversation Ideas** How to create opportunities to communicate with your teen.
- **Rite of Passage Planning Tools** How to plan a special event/moment for your 16 year old.
- **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.



According 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: FREEDOMS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

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



MY LETTER TO YOU FOR YOUR 16TH 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 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. One of my favorite discussions this past year was...

**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.**



SIXTEENTH BIRTHDAY: FREEDOMS & RESPONSIBILITIES

As your 16 year old moves into a new season of life, with newfound freedoms that come with driving a car, we recognize this as a monumental milestone in their life journey. It signifies a shift in their life. Kids at this age are motivated by freedom. They are going to get independence one way or another... they are either going to just take it, OR we can intentionally set them up to gain successful and healthy independence. This is a milestone that as parents, gives us a prime opportunity to speak deeply into the heart, soul and mind of our sixteen year old, inviting them into the adult world. This year, we are encouraging you to focus on important conversations about the new season they are coming into.

A MILESTONE CONVERSATION: Over this year, take time to have both a formal conversation or event, as well as intentional informal conversations as you both affirm and challenge them as they hit this milestone in their lives. It is both a time to celebrate the freedoms and to instill the responsibilities that come with those freedoms. You cannot afford to allow the remaining time with your child at home to get away from you because of a busy schedule - theirs or yours. You only have so much time left to impart important values and instructions in

order to best prepare your child to be without you in this world. We have ideas in this booklet for a more planned event called a Rite of Passage, as well as some ideas to help your child move closer to becoming a well-adjusted independent young adult in more informal ways.

RITE OF PASSAGE: In many cultures a “coming of age” or “rite of passage” serves as an important source of identity for young people coming into their adulthood. A Rite of Passage is a special event signifying a transition from one stage to another. This is an ideal time to affirm and help your child anticipate and prepare for God’s plan for their future. It is a formal challenge to your teen to leave behind the world of childhood and invite them into the ranks of emerging adulthood.

Some families host a simple dinner with family and close friends. Some parents have a private getaway with just their child. Others might take a camping trip or go on a long walk. Whether it’s simple or elaborate, decide and plan for what works best for your teen and your situation to create a special moment in your child’s life to mark this milestone.

MOVING TOWARDS HEALTHY INDEPENDENCE: Throughout this year, creatively find ways to help your child build some independence from you. For each child that will be different, but could range from owning a car to driving out of town to visit grandma on their own to getting a job and paying for something you currently pay for. Give them thoughtful freedoms and then follow up with the responsibilities that go with them.

Parents need to be on the same page here. Sometimes one parent is more comfortable with this than the other. If you tend to be more controlling and struggle with letting things out of your control, lean on your more relaxed spouse or find a friend that can help you with this process of letting go.

PRAY. It's not a cliché. As with anything in life, make sure that you are consistently seeking God's wisdom (James 1:5) as you lead your child towards independence. God promises to give wisdom generously to those who seek it from Him.

LEAD. This is not the time to just throw off the fetters and let them free. They are not ready for that. The frontal lobe in their

brain which helps them make good decisions will not be fully developed until they are in their early to mid-20's. They still need your wisdom to help them process the choices they face. It is hard to be both young and wise. A parent is trying to work themselves out of a job, so teach them how to be responsible, how to problem solve and lead themselves so when they are adults they can survive and thrive without you. (Proverbs 22:6)

HELP. Most teens love the idea of freedom, but often experience stress and fear as they adjust to newfound freedoms. Be there to help them, encourage them and remind them to rely upon God in the challenges they face. You have been like a parent teaching a child to ride a bike. Eventually, you have to let go of the bike and let them try things on their own. If they fail, and they probably will, "teach and discipline and encourage with patience and careful instruction." (2nd Timothy 4:2), always keeping an environment of grace.



INTENTIONAL CONVERSATIONS

In this fast paced time in your life, where it's quite possible that your child is as busy, or busier, than you, take intentional time to spend one on one with your child. Use this time to build your relationship and have important conversations. Here are a few tips:

- Don't have a heavy conversation every time. Sometimes, just have fun. If they initiate a more serious conversation, then go with it.
- Give them plenty of heads up if they have an active social calendar.
- Use these times to ask all kinds of questions about their lives. They will love that you care about their world.
- Make the most of these moments. Affirm. Inspire. Pray. Teach. Prepare. Process. Enjoy. Dream. Laugh. Care.

Here are a few ideas to get you started...

HAPPY HOUR: Meet your child after school for a slush or a shake at Sonic or Steak n Shake. Half priced happy hour drinks keep it cheap and fun.

NO-TECH ZONE: Some restaurants, like Chick-fil-A, have programs where you earn free stuff if you leave your phones in a box during your meal together. You could accomplish the

same thing, wherever you go, by leaving your phones at home or in the car. Disconnect to connect.

PROJECTS: Have your child join you in large projects that would give you quality time together and the bonus of teaching them something useful... like making Thanksgiving Dinner, building a deck, gardening or fixing the car.

MONTHLY DINNER DATES: Whether your budget allows for a sit down restaurant, fast food, or a picnic, invest the time and money in setting up one of these intentional one on one times a month. If you're worried you will run out of things to talk about, google "conversation starters for teens" and have a few ideas up your sleeve for when the conversation lulls.

RITE OF PASSAGE - BIG CONVERSATION: If you choose to have a formal event or an informal "rite of passage" conversation with your child, consider the following points as you plan it:

1. **CREATE A PLAN** Create a plan to make this a meaningful experience. Utilize the Rite of Passage Planning Sheet provided by Homepointe.org in this booklet to help you decide which option would be best for your family.

2. INVITE PEOPLE TO SPEAK INTO YOUR CHILD'S LIFE

Invite people who have had an impact in your teen's life and/or whom they respect to speak into the life of your son or daughter this year. Give each person a specific topic on which he or she will speak or write a letter. Some topics may include work, marriage, integrity, faith, purity, family, etc. If your child despises being the center of attention, skip the formal event and ask people to write letters. Take the letters with you on a getaway or a private dinner with just you and your child. Or have the event, but schedule time during the evening where people take him or her aside and talk to them privately. Make it easy for others to participate by providing them with recommended wording for their talk or letter in order to help them avoid becoming nervous or attending unprepared.

3. GIVE A BLESSING AND A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

It is very important that parents use this milestone to give a blessing, affirming the teen's potential and expressing gratitude for his or her life. Consider having it written so that your child can keep it with them as they grow up. You might even refer back to their two year old packet when you spent the year focusing on blessing your child. Take time to provide direction for the future. Cast vision and direct your child in seeking the Lord as they enter a season of significant decisions that will impact their future.

Remember that your one word parenting plan from the Phase Card is MOBILIZE. Give them something to reach for.

4. GIVE A GIFT

Consider purchasing or making something to give your teen. It doesn't need to be extravagant. It is more important that it serve as a tangible keepsake of the event or conversation, or a symbol of the transition from childhood to adulthood.

5. SET THE STAGE FOR THE NEXT SEASON

The Rite of Passage event serves as an opportunity to set a new tone for the changing relationship with your child. Your role is changing from primarily teacher to mostly coach as he or she accepts the new freedoms and responsibilities that accompany young adulthood. Let your child know that you will be there to help him or her work through the challenges and navigate the landmines as they take ownership for choices and their walk with God. Use the ideas on the previous page in this booklet to plan intentional one-on-one times to connect with your child throughout this year. Establish some good habits now and they will likely continue as your child becomes an adult.





RITE OF PASSAGE PLANNING GUIDE

HOMEPOINT.ORG has put together this planning guide for those who choose to have a special event this year for your child. Even the most simple rite of passage experience can have a powerful impact in your teen's life. Ask yourself the following questions to plan the best approach for your son or daughter.

ASSESS YOUR SITUATION

- Is our relationship strong enough for the experience to feel authentic vs. forced?
- Does my child have other adults in his/her life who have had enough influence to participate in such an experience?
- Does my teen show signs he/she is willing to move toward adult responsibilities and attitudes?
- If you answer no to any of these questions it might be better to plan a special dinner alone together to begin meaningful dialog rather than attempt the full rite of passage event.
- Does a formal event fit our child or our family? Or would a weekend away, a camping trip or a special dinner with just our child and us be more meaningful?

PUT IT ON THE CALENDAR SOON

- What day is best to make this event special? On a birthday? In conjunction with a holiday? As a special day of its own?

- What date would work best for those who might need to travel to participate?
- If you're bringing in guests, how much advance notice will they need to participate?
- If you're going away with your child, make sure you check work, school and social calendars, especially if you are going to do the getaway as a surprise.

CHOOSE YOUR PARTICIPANTS AND GUESTS

- If you are doing a private getaway or meal, these same questions would be appropriate if you are asking them to write a letter for your child to read.
- What relatives should participate? (Grandparent? Respected aunt or uncle? Older brother or sister?)
- Is the child close to a pastor, youth minister, teacher or coach he/she respects?

If you are not planning the event as a surprise, invite your teen to suggest who he/she would like to be included.

PLAN THE EVENT

- Would my child prefer a formal event or casual experience?
- What would be a good setting for the event? The house? Grandparent's home? A favorite restaurant? The church? A park? A favorite vacation or camping spot?
- What kind of fun activity would our child enjoy doing with the older men or women before the formal portion of the event? (For example, a teen boy might enjoy going to a shooting range or golfing while a girl might prefer shopping or tennis.)

BE CLEAR ON THE PURPOSE: The goal of the Rite of Passage is to affirm and challenge your child as they transition into adulthood. To help you explain the event to those you invite to participate and provide them with guidance for crafting a meaningful letter download the full planning guide at lakepointe.org/faithpath/riteofpassage. Even if you are doing a modified or simplified version of the event, you can get some good ideas from this full guide.

MORE IDEAS: If you would like some additional ideas on planning a rite of passage, we recommend the book [Spiritual Milestones](#) by Jim & Janet Weidmann & J. Otis and Gail Ledbetter. (Available from heritagebuilders.com)

ALTERNATIVE IDEAS TO A RITE OF PASSAGE: Due to the personality or your child, circumstances in your life or the nature of the relationship you have with your child, you may not feel as though something this formal or planned fits you very well. That's okay. This idea of a rite of passage event is intended to challenge parents to speak something meaningful into the life of their child. Do not feel guilty or less of a spiritual parent if you simply cannot do an event.

However, the concept of speaking into the life of your child doesn't have to be tied to something like this. Use special days like their birthday, Christmas, your birthday or Mother's Day or Father's Day as a natural opportunity to accomplish the idea of inviting them into adulthood. For example, Dad could use Father's Day and say something like, "It's been such a blessing to be your dad, Jacob. This year, as you've turned 16, I wanted to take today to let you know some things that are on my heart about being your dad. You are such a great kid and I see in you..." This type of conversation will still seize the opportunity to accomplish the concept of the rite of passage, without the additional dynamics of a formal event.





SAFEGUARDING YOUR HOME

PROTECTING YOUR CHILD FROM ONLINE THREATS

Did 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 and 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.

Get 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!

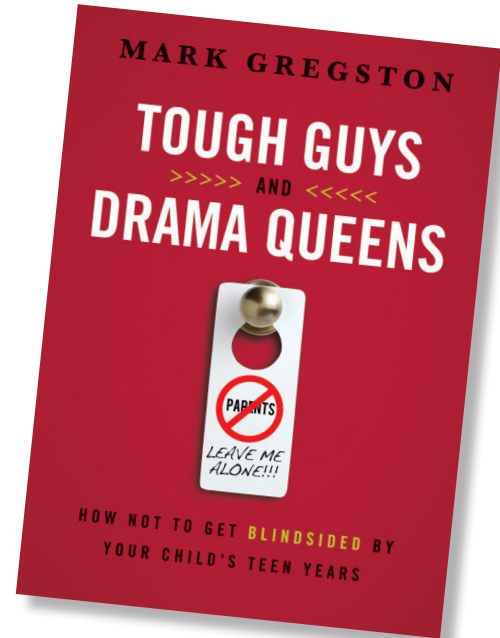
This two-week course will reveal:

- 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



THIS YEAR'S PARENTING PLAN SUMMARY/CHECKLIST

WEEKS TO GRADUATION: 104 and counting
PHASE PARENTING PHRASE: Mobilize Their Potential

*“When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child.
But when I grew up, I put away childish things.”*
1st Corinthians 13:11

- Read the contents of this booklet and the tri-fold Phase Summary that comes with this booklet.
- Write a letter to my child.
- Determine if I will have a special Rite of Passage Event or Getaway.
- Take intentional time alone with your child to talk about life.
- Intentionally give my child appropriate freedoms with clear expectations and accountability.
- 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. 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) 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.
- **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.
- **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 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. 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.

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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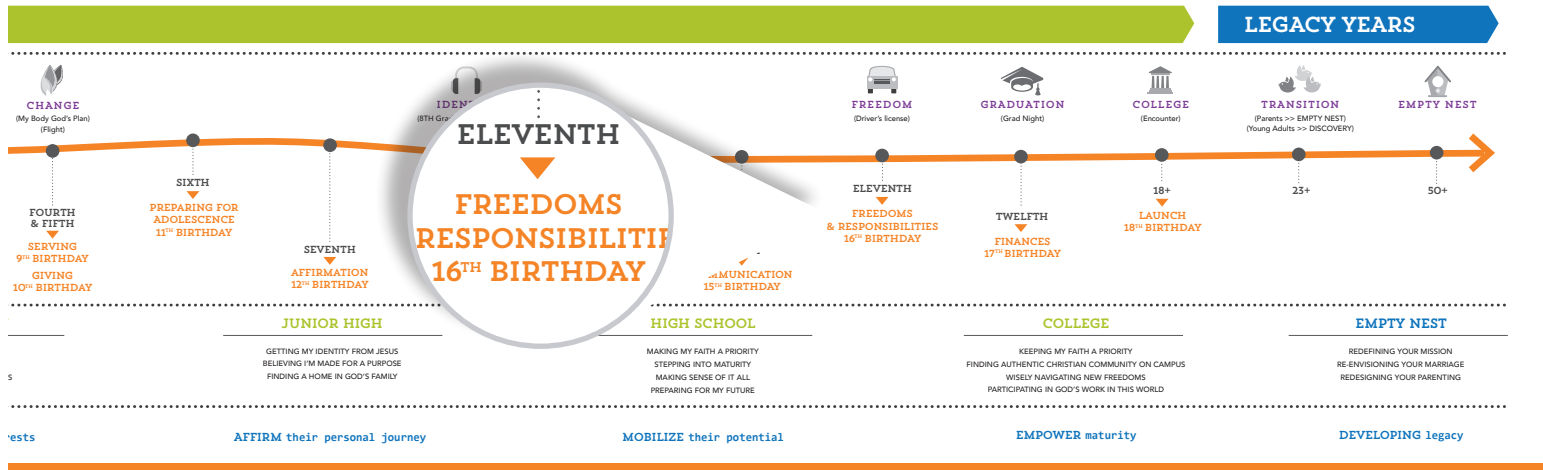
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EASTVIEW FAMILY RESOURCES

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.