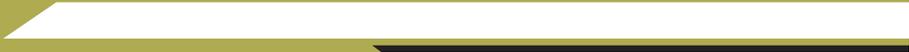




FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL



Milestones



WHAT IS THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL MILESTONE?

As children transition into the school years, life for the entire family changes. Whether parents choose public school, private school, or homeschool, the primary focus of their child's day will be academics. Along with the transition to school comes the opportunity to be involved in sports and other extra-curricular activities. The choices you make for your children during this time can set the trajectory for family priorities and how time is spent. It is crucial that you choose to make training your children to love and follow Christ a priority above other pursuits. Peninsula wants to celebrate with you as your child enters school and wants to walk beside you to help you maintain your family's focus on Christ during this pivotal transition.

WHAT IS THE GOAL?

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 gives the foundational call to parents to become the primary faith trainers of their children. This scriptural call to parents is one of life’s highest priorities. Parents are not simply attempting to create good, hard-working citizens or moral children who respect others. **Parents introduce their children to the God of the universe, their Creator, who loves them deeply.** Christianity is not a set of rules or right answers but a relationship with Jesus Christ.

During this Milestone, we want to help you develop spiritual habits in your home that will lay a foundation for your child’s relationship with Christ. And we want to share with you some tips for keeping Christ the center of your home during the early elementary years.

Deuteronomy 6:5-6 states, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.”*

SPIRITUAL HABITS FOR YOUR HOME

1. FAITH TALKS

A Faith Talk is an intentional time set aside each week for conversation around the Scripture. Faith Talks take on different forms according to how you and your family are wired. But as different as they may look, Faith Talks should be:

- **Intentional:** You place effort and energy into creating a good environment to teach God's truth.
- **Consistent:** Faith Talks should happen at least once a week. Frequency and consistency open the door to spiritual conversation.
- **Conversational:** According to their development, let the teaching time be a conversation and not simply a mini-sermon.
- **Scriptural:** God's Word changes your child!

2. GOD MOMENTS

God Moments are informal, unplanned moments where God shows up in your child's life. The importance of parents capitalizing on these moments in their child's life cannot be overstated. Intentional Faith Talks will often stir these moments in your child. The rush and busyness of life challenges the ability to perceive and capitalize on these important moments. Taking time to answer questions or point our children to Jesus and the Bible are crucial.

3. SHARING A BLESSING

As adults, we know that life is tough. Home is meant to be a safe place to land. Take time on a regular basis to communicate acceptance and commitment to your child. Affirm him or her for who they are and not just what they do. Your verbal words of love and encouragement help to establish the close relationship that will keep your child's heart turned toward home.

4. RELATIONSHIP

Discipleship outside of a loving relationship just becomes a list of rules. When your child's heart is turned toward yours, they will want to spend time with you and will be much more likely to share your Biblical values and love for Christ. Spend time with your child. Schedule time for fun, family activities in your calendar.

Tips for the early school years

- **Choose activities wisely.** There are countless “good” organizations for your child to be a part of during their early elementary years. This is a great time for your child to explore a variety of interests to determine what they may want to pursue as they get older. But getting involved in too many things spreads your family thin and makes it difficult to connect with one another. Be careful to choose activities that do not interfere with church attendance. Though church attendance does not equal spiritual maturity, your child will definitely notice if you allow an activity to take priority over worship and fellowship with your church family. Your actions speak very loudly to your children. Looking into the future, it's very difficult for a teenager to connect in a youth group when they have not gotten to know their peers at church because they have been engaged in other activities on Sundays. Allow your child to explore his or her interests and be their biggest cheerleader; but keep those pursuits in perspective, always pursuing God as your first priority.
- **Establish a Family Identity.** Your child needs a place to belong that is fun, loving, and Christ-centered. God designed your family to be that place. Establish traditions that make your family unique and give your children an opportunity to participate. Your children should always

understand that their family has been created uniquely by God to serve Him, and has a special role designed by God for His Kingdom.

- **Take Time Out Regularly.** Time out can be a formal family vacation but does not have to be. Time out is a time when your entire family is together, and you pull away from the regular schedules and demands of the day. Once your oldest child enters school, schedules change for the entire family. There is a lot more time spent out of the house, and the family calendar suddenly revolves around the school calendar. As each new year approaches, determine several times in the year when your family can get away and be together. Use spring break, Christmas vacation, and summer break not just as a break from academics, but as a time to strengthen your family. If you wait for your schedule to “slow down,” time out will never happen. You must be intentional and proactive.
- **Celebrate your child.** As your child enters school....homeschool, private school, or public school...there will be times when he or she receives special recognition or gives a special presentation. Be there. Use these times as an opportunity to speak a verbal blessing to your child. Tell him or her that they did a good job and that you are proud of them. And more importantly, look for the ways your child honors Christ in their school setting. This may be a hard work ethic, reaching out to another student who is not accepted by their peers or praying for a friend to come to know Christ. Identify the ways you see God working in your child and using your child in the school environment. Affirm your child as you acknowledge God's work in their life.

The first day of school for your child can be an emotional whirlwind. It is filled with pride, excitement, nostalgia, and sometimes a desire for your little one to remain young forever. However you as a parent feel about this transition, it is a time of great change for your child and for your family. Celebrate your child growing up and going to school. Be diligent in loving Christ and pointing your child to Him.



RESOURCES

Bedtime Blessings *by John Tripp*

Bringing Up Girls *by James Dobson*

Bringing Up Boys *by James Dobson*

Faith Begins at Home Mom *by Mark Holman*

Faith Begins at Home Dad *by Mark Holman*