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A Letter from Pastor Chris

Dear Friend,

It is the desire of the Kids Point and Student Point Ministries of Grace Point Church to come alongside parents and partner with them in the gospel. These ministries exist as much for the parents as they do the children and students they serve.

Our friends at “Think Orange” have identified some of the key elements of discipleship from childhood through adolescence. This handbook is designed to be a tool in your parenting toolbox.

It’s important to know that as your child matures, your parenting role will also need to change. Here is a quick reference guide to understanding parental roles:

- **Catering (Birth – Age 2)** During the first two years of your child's life, you cater to their every need. Your schedule revolves around theirs.
- **Controlling (Ages 2 – 10)** During these years, you turn things around and establish your authority. You control their environment.
- **Coaching (Ages 10 – 14)** During these years, you start giving some control, but you are still in charge. For example, you can give your kids options from which they can choose, but you determine the options.
- **Consulting (Ages 14 – 18)** By this time, your kids have fired you as a parent, but they hire you back as a consultant. They make more of their own decisions, while you help them learn from their mistakes.
- **Caring (Ages 18+)** At this age, you are finished controlling their lives. Your primary role is to show care. The process is called “weaning.” There may be times that they “hire” you as consultant or coach, but your primary role is to care.

We at Grace Point Church want to partner with you in providing the resources you need for parenting.

It is my prayer that your families will be stronger and Christ will be honored.

for the Gospel,



Pastor Chris

SECTION ONE:

Infancy Stage (Birth – 2 Years Old)

The Infancy Stage is also the “hearing stage.” Our children are listening to everything. So, talk to them. Read Scripture to them. Sing songs to them. Pray over them. In fact, much of these principles can also be applied to the Prenatal Stage.

1. What to Expect

- Tears
- Lack of sleep
- Social smiles
- Unconditional love

2. Say Things Like

- God, thank you for my child (pray aloud so they can hear you!)
- Jesus loves you (sing songs aloud).
- Let's read about how God made the world. Let's read about Jesus (read from a children's Bible with pictures).
- Let's go to church (connect with a faith community).

3. Bible

When you read to your children, you are teaching your kids how to read and understand the Bible. We recommend the *Jesus Storybook Bible*.

- Read from a children's Bible with pictures each night before bedtime.
- Tell them that the Bible is a special book.
- Sing simple songs about God and Jesus.
 - *Jesus Loves Me*
 - *This Little Light of Mine*
 - *The B-I-B-L-E*
 - *Deep and Wide*
 - *He's Got the Whole World in His Hands*
 - *My God Is So Big*
 - *Father Abraham Has Many Sons*
 - *I'm In the Lord's Army*
 - *Zacchaeus*

4. Prayer

When you pray with your children, you are demonstrating your own walk with God and showing them how to pray.

- Pray before meals and at bedtime each day so they can hear.
- Tell them that prayer is a special time to talk with God.
- Use songs and poems to help memorize prayers.

5. Church

When you attend church with your children, you are modeling the importance of living in a faith community.

- Bring your child to church consistently. They will begin to develop a sense of trust as needs are met and they sense expressions of love.
- Talk about church being a special place. Let them know it is important to you.
- Prepare the night before. Lay out clothes and pack diaper bags. Have a consistent Sunday morning routine leading up to church.

6. Action

Your behavior is setting a pattern for their future behavior. Show your kids how to put their faith into action.

- Show your kids how to share (cookies, toys, rolling a ball with others, etc.). Have them give cookies to their playmates.

7. Daily Routines

MORNING:

Sing simple songs (e.g. "Rise & Shine") and a simple prayer. Tell your kids simple truths like "Jesus loves you" or "God made everything."

EVENING:

Eat dinner together at the dinner table as often as you can. Teach them how to close their eyes and fold their hands. Say simple mealtime poems or prayers together.

BEDTIME:

Read from a children's Bible each night. Sing a simple worship song and pray together as they lay in bed.

SECTION TWO:

Early Childhood (Ages 3 – 5)

The Early Childhood Stage is also the “watching stage.” Our children are watching everything you do. In fact, they want to do what you’re doing. So, your actions are critical at this stage.

1. What to Expect

- Tantrums
- Time-out
- Fun development of personality and character

2. Say Things Like

- Talk about the things your child learned at church (e.g. “How did the Samaritan take care of his neighbor?”).
- Model prayer in action (e.g. “Are you scared? Let’s talk to God about it.”).
- Talk about the Gospel. (e.g. “God made you in His image!” and “Jesus wants to be your friend forever.”).

3. Bible

When you read to your children, you are teaching your kids how to read and understand the Bible. We recommend the *Jesus Storybook Bible* through age 5.

- Read from a children’s Bible with pictures each night before bedtime. Ask simple questions to start discussion, and have your child retell the Bible story.
- Tell them that the Bible is God’s Word, and it is true.
- Help you child begin to memorize simple Bible verses and big ideas in the Bible like God’s unconditional love.
- Provide opportunities for your child to see how you read the Bible in your own personal quiet time.

4. Prayer

When you pray with your children, you are demonstrating your own walk with God and showing them how to pray.

- Pray together each day in the mornings, afternoon, and at night.
- Provide opportunities for them to see you pray on your own and pray over others.

- Encourage your child to say simple prayers on their own.
- Ask if they have anything they would like to pray about.

5. Church

When you attend church with your children, you are modeling the importance of living in a faith community.

- Teach your kids that church is a special, safe, and fun place to go.
- Make church a priority. Attend consistently and make sure your kids are participating in preschool activities.
- Talk about your church. Invite people to come with you and make sure your kids see and hear you inviting others.
- Ask your child what they learned in church and discuss together.

6. Action

Your behavior is setting a pattern for their future behavior. Show your kids how to put their faith into action.

- Have your kids express their love for God by serving others. Find opportunities to serve together as a family.
- Teach your kids about the importance of giving and give them money for the offering.
- Teach your kids about the importance of sharing (e.g. toys, food, etc.).
- Sponsor a child through Compassion International and have your kids draw pictures to send to the child your family sponsors.

7. Daily Routines

MORNING:

Pray together and ask God to bless the day.

EVENING:

Eat dinner together as often as you can. Pray together before you eat. Have your kids give thanks through prayer. Talk about your day and how you saw Jesus in it.

BEDTIME:

Read from a children's Bible each night. Talk about what the story means and allow your child to ask questions. Sing a worship song and pray together as they lay in bed.

SECTION THREE:

Middle Childhood (Grades K – 3)

The Middle Childhood Stage is also the “learning stage.” Our children want to know how something is done so they can do it.

1. What to Expect

- Giant transitions
- Homework
- Independence
- Extreme growth

2. Say Things Like

- Share your personal testimony of faith (e.g. “When I first trusted Jesus...”).
- Offer to pray about things they share with you (e.g. “Can I pray about that with you?”).
- Teach them the principle: “You should treat others the way you want to be treated.”

3. Bible

When you read to your children, you are teaching your kids how to read and understand the Bible. We recommend the *Hands-On Bible*.

- Take a moment to read the Bible with your child every morning before school and at night before bed. Ask simple questions to start discussion like: “What is something you noticed in these verses? What example can we follow from this story? What does this tell us about Jesus? What does this tell us about ourselves?”
- Help your child memorize Bible verses and to apply it to their lives.
- Encourage your kids to navigate and read the Bible on their own and find specific phrases or Bible verses.
- Have your kids bring their Bible to church as they learn to navigate God's Word.

4. Prayer

When you pray with your children, you are demonstrating your own walk with God and showing them how to pray.

- Introduce intercessory prayer by having your children pray for others.
- Encourage your child to pray on their own (e.g. when they are happy, sad, thankful, in need, etc.).
- Teach your child to pray immediately as they have or see a need.

5. Church

When you attend church with your children, you are modeling the importance of living in a faith community.

- Make church a priority. Attend consistently and make sure your kids are in an age-appropriate learning environment.
- Have your kids invite friends to attend church with them.
- Ask your child what they learned at church and discuss together.

6. Action

Your behavior is setting a pattern for their future behavior. Show your kids how to put their faith into action.

- Get involved as a family in church projects and serving opportunities.
- Encourage your child to share the Gospel with others. Teach them the four themes of the Gospel: Creation, the Fall, Redemption, and Restoration.
- When facing tough times and trials, help your children walk by faith.

7. Daily Routines

MORNING:

Provide a quiet space where your kids can read their Bible before school. Pray together and talk about the day and how to share Jesus with others. Play worship music throughout the morning to prepare their hearts for the day.

EVENING:

Eat dinner together as often as you can. Share "highs" and "lows" from the day and pray for one another.

BEDTIME:

Read from a children's Bible each night. Discuss what you read and answer questions. Listen to their thoughts about what they learned and pray together.

SECTION FOUR:

Late Childhood (Grades 4 – 5)

The Late Childhood Stage is also the “emotional stage.” Our children are learning to express their emotions. They often struggle with self-esteem. They need to know they have intrinsic value because God has made them in His image.

1. What to Expect

- Can read silently and remember what they've read
- Will start to value peer approval
- May enjoy service opportunities
- Memorizing facts with much more ease
- Wants to be seen as independent and mature

2. Say Things Like

- How can I pray for you today/this week?
- Having faith isn't always easy, but you can trust God no matter what!
- What do you think is the wisest choice in this situation?
- Don't ever get tired of doing what is right (cf. 2 Thess. 3:13).
- If you were them, how do you think you would want to be treated?
- Have you read anything in the Bible that means a lot to you right now?

3. Bible

We recommend the *Hands-On Bible*.

- Lead a family devotional for your family once a week.
- Read a Bible passage, then ask simple questions to start discussion (e.g. “What is something you noticed in these verses? What does this tell us about Jesus?”).
- Plan some family games that help them learn and navigate learning facts about the Bible.
- (If possible) take them on a discovery vacation that makes the Bible become more real for them (e.g. replica of Noah's ark in Kentucky, Bible Museum in Washington DC).

4. Prayer

When you pray with your children, you are demonstrating your own walk with God and showing them how to pray.

- Teach your child the principles behind the Lord's Prayer.
- Ask your child to lead some of the family prayer times.
- Help them feel comfortable praying in public.

5. Church

When you attend church with your children, you are modeling the importance of living in a faith community.

- Make church a priority. Attend consistently and make sure your kids are in an age-appropriate learning environment.
- Schedule monthly social activities with other families from church who have children the same age.
- Bring them with you into worship at least once each month.

6. Action

Your behavior is setting a pattern for their future behavior. Show your kids how to put their faith into action.

- Make them aware of missions and how Christians are called to be passionate about missions.
- Make a list of your family's core values. Explain why these are non-negotiables for your family.
- Encourage your child to share the Gospel with others. Teach them the four themes of the Gospel: Creation, the Fall, Redemption, and Restoration.

7. Daily Routines

MORNING:

Be positive and use this time to encourage them for the day. Instill purpose with encouraging, gospel-centered words as they start off their day.

EVENING:

As you listen and engage in conversation, discuss their day. Discuss why your family values are important.

BEDTIME:

Be encouraging to them and make sure they know you care about the things that are important to them, and that you love them no matter what.

SECTION FIVE:

Early Adolescence (Grades 6 – 8)

The Early Adolescence Stage is also the “social stage.” Our children’s friends have a growing influence and importance to our children.

1. What to Expect

- Enjoys learning new skills and being challenged.
- Will start to have the ability to see the world in different perspectives.
- Will be able to solve complex multi-step problems.
- Capable of self-evaluation and self-critique.
- Will benefit from talking about what they are feeling & why.
- Will often mask their emotions to fit in socially.

2. Say Things Like

- How can I pray for you today/this week?
- Can we pray about this together?
- God made you. He knows you, and He loves you.
- The way you live can show others who Jesus is.
- God will never stop loving you.
- I have questions too. What other things do you wonder about?
- What would be a fun way we could serve others together?

3. Bible

We recommend the *Essential Teen Study Bible*.

- Sit down with them and show your children how you plan a family devotion each week.
- Find a reading plan that works for your family to read together. The goal is to help your child develop a daily habit of time with God in His Word and in prayer.

4. Prayer

When you pray with your middle schooler, you are demonstrating your own walk with God and showing them how to pray.

- Start a family prayer journal that you talk through during your family devotion time. Celebrate together when God answers some of those prayers. Use this time to emphasize the importance of intercessory prayer (e.g. pray for friends, family, pastors, etc.).
- Ask your child to pray for something that's on your mind.
- Consistently make sure your family is praying together, out loud, and that everyone in the family is participating.

5. Church

When you attend church with your children, you are modeling the importance of living in a faith community.

- Make church a priority. Attend consistently and make sure your kids are involved in the Student Ministry activities.
- Allow your child to invite their unchurched friends to "spend the night" on Saturdays at your home with the understanding that everyone will attend church the next morning.

6. Action

Your behavior is setting a pattern for their future behavior. Show your kids how to put their faith into action.

- Find opportunities to consistently serve with your child at church.
- Go with your child on a mission trip.

7. Daily Routines

MORNING:

Be positive and use this time to encourage them for the day. Instill purpose with encouraging, gospel-centered words as they start off their day.

EVENING:

As you listen and engage in conversation, discuss their day. Discuss why your family values are important.

BEDTIME:

Ask them each night if they want or need to talk about anything before they go to bed. Remind them that you are always available and that good or bad, they can tell you anything and you will always love them.

SECTION SIX:

Late Adolescence (Grades 9 – 12)

The Late Adolescence Stage is also the “planning for the future stage.” Our children are beginning to set their own goals for life and the future. However, they still struggle with long-term planning.

1. What to Expect

- Increasingly able to focus, recall, and organize information
- Resists embarrassing situations
- Increased interest in dating and sexual expression (64% of 12 graders are sexually active)
- More vulnerable to addiction (e.g. substances, self-harm, pornography)
- Desires responsibilities that increase freedom
- Wants parents to listen more and advise less
- Often thrives and is more motivated in a particular area of interest
- Responds well to specific praise

2. Say Things Like

- How can I pray for you today/this week?
- Can we pray about this together?
- What is something you feel like God is teaching you right now?
- What do you like about church and the student ministry?
- There is nothing you will ever do that could make God stop loving you!
- What you told me about... it made me think of this verse in the Bible.

3. Bible

We recommend the *Apologetics Study Bible for Students*.

- Ask your high schooler to lead the family devotion 1-2 times a month. Help them prepare to do that until they feel comfortable doing so alone.
- Find opportunities for the family to read, study, and discuss apologetics together (e.g. “The Case for...” series).

4. Prayer

When you pray with your high schooler, you are demonstrating your own walk with God and showing them how to pray.

- Get them to start a personal prayer journal they write in each week.
- Consistently ask your child how you can pray for them and become more transparent on how they can pray for you.
- Consistently pray together and continue to challenge them by asking who they are praying for to respond to the saving message of the Gospel.

5. Church

When you attend church with your children, you are modeling the importance of living in a faith community.

- Have an on-going relationship and conversation with their student ministry leaders.
- Identify five godly adults outside of your family who are investing into your high schooler.
- Allow your child to invite their unchurched friends to "spend the night" on Saturdays at your home and attend church the next morning.

6. Action

Your behavior is setting a pattern for their future behavior. Show your kids how to put their faith into action.

- Challenge them to find a place to serve in the church.
- Send them on a mission trip with the student ministry.

7. Daily Routines

MORNING:

Be positive and use this time to encourage them for the day. Instill purpose with encouraging, gospel-centered words as they start off their day.

EVENING:

As you listen and engage in conversation, discuss their day. Discuss why your family values are important.

BEDTIME:

Stay consistent available. When they open up, use that time to understand how they are navigating the stress and pressures of being a teenager.