

northwest bible



FAMILY MINISTRY STRATEGY

A NOTE TO PARENTS:

Have you ever heard the phrase “fail to plan, plan to fail”? Many of you reading this likely just heard your dad’s voice echo in your head. As annoying as that “dad speak” can be, the phrase is valid. Good plans can create good outcomes. Most people live by this in some form or fashion. After all, we don’t necessarily land in our careers by accident; we plan and work for them. And we can’t become good at things we love without practice and dedication. So, it’s no surprise that parenting and raising kids are no different.

We can’t guarantee what our children’s lives will look like, but we can help guide them along the way by making a plan and staying present. Studies have shown – and teachers will tell you – the success of a child’s academic path relies heavily on their parents’ involvement and investment in their life.

If this is true for education, how much more important is a parent’s influence when it comes to their child’s walk with Jesus? But in the always-increasing rush of everyday life, it’s all too easy for us as parents to take a step back and rely on church programs to develop our children’s love for Jesus.

This makes sense if we believe outsourcing the development of their faith is the best plan. Many of us know that if our child struggles in school, we find them a tutor. If they struggle in sports, we look for a trainer. So, if they need Jesus, it seems only natural to turn to our church, right? But where this plan breaks down is simply... time.

There are 168 hours in a seven-day week. If a family regularly attends church without fail, then a youth or children’s minister would ideally get an hour or two each week with their child. The problem is, they’re not the only family attending church, so that minister or staff member can only dedicate a few minutes to each child. Even if kids attend multiple events a week, they’re still spending just a fraction of their time at church or in a ministry.



In contrast, after subtracting time for sleep and school/work, parents potentially have 60-70 hours a week with their children. Even with all the events and activities eating away at our schedules, there's still a huge chunk of time left compared with the church's 1-2 hours a week.

It's also not just about where kids spend their time; it also matters who they're with. Children are influenced by the people they know, love, and trust the most - which is why the guidance of a parent far outweighs that of a church volunteer or employee. Studies have shown that, when asked, kids will overwhelmingly say their parent or guardian has the most influence in their life. Even if it's sometimes hard for us to remember or believe, every child longs for a meaningful relationship with their parents.

Knowing this, how can the church and parents work together to help kids fall in love with Jesus and cultivate meaningful relationships with Him that last for life?

Well, we plan for it and work the plan! This is where Northwest's family strategy can come in handy. Our goal here is to help parents step into your rightful role as the primary disciple makers in your home and come alongside you to equip you for success. We're hopeful this will ultimately increase the odds of kids living faithful lives with Jesus and help us create a meaningful and trusting relationship with you, their parents.

Once again, this isn't guaranteed. However, we can almost guarantee that a child will not walk with Jesus if we choose to do nothing.



One study shows a child born in America to parents who do not have an active faith in Christ still has about a 35% chance of dedicating their life to Jesus. If their mom is a believer and their dad is not, that chance grows to about 50%. And in a household where both mom and dad have a growing relationship with Jesus, that number jumps to a more than 90% chance.

A 90% chance of a child following Jesus for their entire life is an incredible starting point. But how much greater would it be if we could push it to, say, 95%? Maybe even 99%? And how much stronger could their walk with God be if their church and family worked together to pour into them and guide them on their way?

That's our hope for this family strategy guide — to not only give our children the best starting point possible, but also to provide the encouragement and resources you need to walk this road with them both during and after their time in our ministry.

how to **USE THIS GUIDE:**

ESTABLISH WEEKLY RHYTHMS.

This may be one of the most important elements of Northwest's family strategy. Set aside weekly time for you and your family to discuss what God is doing in each of your lives. This family time doesn't have to be academic or structured; it's simply time set aside each week to open God's word together and learn.

PRAY WITH AND FOR YOUR KIDS OFTEN.

Prayer is a vital part of our walk with God, and practice is key to building any habit. Use built-in household rhythms to pray together. Look at how you can incorporate prayer at meals, bedtime, or even when you are driving to school.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF NORTHWEST'S RESOURCES.

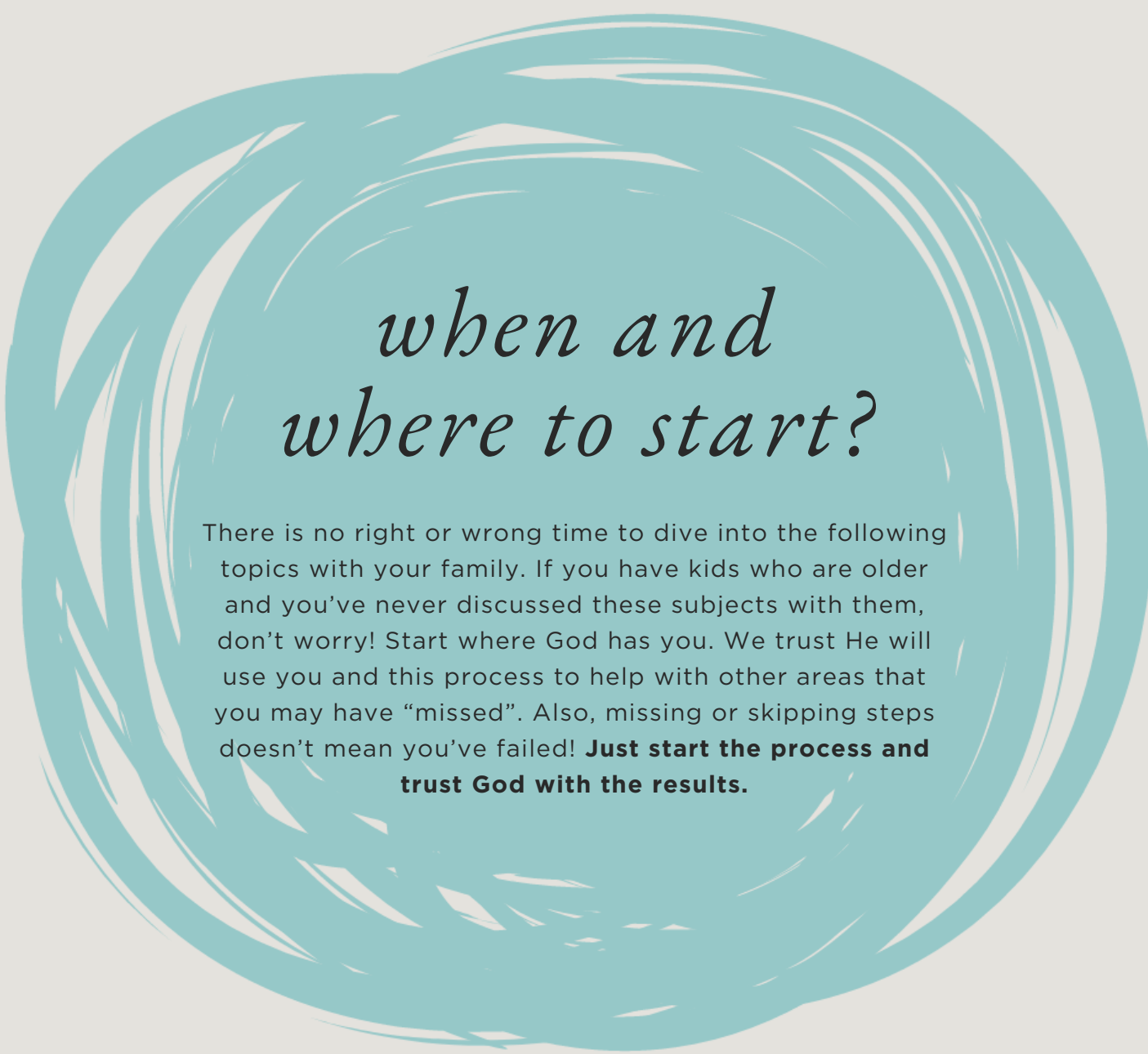
In the following pages, you'll find a comprehensive plan to provide teachings and resources tailored to meet the age-appropriate milestones your kids are experiencing. Along with these, we'll also seek to provide parenting resources or classes to help you continue discussion and growth at home. Don't be afraid to take advantage of these - they're here for you!

understanding the
**NORTHWEST
FAMILY
STRATEGY**

Each week, kids and students across our campus spend time in God's Word learning how they can **live a life dedicated to following Jesus**. Our curriculum and lessons are currently formulated based on age, and this will not change moving forward. However, we also recognize there are lessons that are helpful to teach during certain stages of childhood and youth to help them understand our world and how God's Word can help them navigate it.

Subjects such as identity, sex and dating, how to study the Bible, and apologetics (among others) will all appear in a yearly rotation to help parents and kids tackle these topics. The weekly rhythms above are crucial, but we also want to emphasize the importance of addressing these topics, as they play a large part in how we view ourselves and the world around us.





when and where to start?

There is no right or wrong time to dive into the following topics with your family. If you have kids who are older and you've never discussed these subjects with them, don't worry! Start where God has you. We trust He will use you and this process to help with other areas that you may have "missed". Also, missing or skipping steps doesn't mean you've failed! **Just start the process and trust God with the results.**



They say with preschoolers that the days are long, but the years are short. This is where the marathon of parenthood starts! The preschool years are incredibly formative; during this time, your child is soaking things in, learning new things daily, and growing in leaps and bounds. The average preschooler learns best through songs, large motor skill development, and hands-on experiences. Here at Northwest, we'll aim to help them learn about Jesus using these methods. Examples of this include singing songs based in biblical truth with them and providing large group settings where they can freely explore their environment.

preschool **RESOURCES**

Parent/Child Dedication

This is a special time when parents of young children can make a public commitment to God to follow biblical principles as a family. PCD also provides a setting for the church body to support parents as they make their commitment. Prior to each dedication service, we offer a short class to help parents learn more about why we dedicate children, how to disciple your child daily, and practical ways to raise your child up in the way they should go.

The MomCo (formerly MOPS)

The MomCo encourages and equips moms of young children to realize their potential as mothers, women, and leaders in relationship with Jesus and in partnership with the church. Local chapters meet about twice a month to encourage, equip, and walk with each other through the life stage of mothering preschoolers. MomCo meets from September through April typically.

New & Expecting Parent Workshop

Are you expecting a baby, adopting a child, or a new parent who's not quite sure where this path leads? This workshop is for you! We'll have practical help for you and your new baby, plus time for fellowship with and hear from moms and dads who have walked this path before.

Transitioning to Kindergarten

Your child is no longer a baby; they're heading off into the great big world of full-time school! And we're here to help make this transition as smooth as possible. In the weeks before children are promoted to the next class or grade, we take our four-year-olds to visit our elementary wing and provide parents with a chance to meet with our Elementary Ministry Director. We've also put together a guide to help you navigate this big change!



the ELEMENTARY YEARS

Elementary kids grow and develop at a tremendous pace. Kids hit milestones like going to school for the first time, learning to read, developing friendships with their peers, and so much more. And as they grow, kids also begin to grasp abstract concepts and ideas, making this a crucial age to lay a strong foundation of theology and doctrine that will stick with them in the years to come. This is a pivotal period for the emotional, social, and spiritual development of your kids. Our goal is to help them — and you! — navigate this growth and guide them to better understand God in the context of our fast-changing world.



elementary **RESOURCES**

1 CREATING FAMILY TIME
You are the primary disciples to your kids, and we want to equip and encourage you to take full advantage of the time you have with them! This class is focused on helping you learn how to weave intentional family time into your week and create opportunities to have conversations about Jesus with your kids.

2 SCREEN AND TECHNOLOGY SAFETY
Technology and screens are simply a part of the world we live in today and safely navigating them can be a daunting task! This class is designed to give you the resources and knowledge you need to protect your family from the potential harm that technology and screens can hold.

3 “WHAT IS...” SERIES (2ND GRADE)
Prayer, communion, giving, and worship are all key elements to a believer’s life. During kids’ time in 2nd grade, we’ll spend four weeks exploring these elements as we introduce kids to the traditions and life-giving practices we find in scripture.

4 TRUE IDENTITY SERIES (4TH GRADE)
Understanding who we are in Christ has never been more important than in today’s culture of confusion. Issues of gender, self-esteem, and more can all be traced back to a misunderstanding of our identity. This four-week study is designed to establish a foundational understanding for kids of their TRUE identity in Christ and their value as a creation and child of God.

5 HOW TO READ THE BIBLE (5TH GRADE)
The value of reading God’s Word in its true context and knowing how to apply it in our daily lives is immeasurable. During their 5th grade year, we’ll spend six weeks providing kids with the skills they need to start reading the Bible and understanding it so they can grow in their exploration of faith and walk with Christ.

6 MIDDLE SCHOOL PREP (5TH GRADE)
As sad as we are for kids to leave elementary, we know it’s good and exciting for them to step into their middle school years! As each new school year approaches, we’ll begin to prepare and encourage kids for the transition to 6th grade and introduce them to a few exciting aspects of our middle school ministry.

7 BAPTISM CLASS
What does it mean to follow Jesus? What is baptism? How do I know if I’m saved or not? These questions and many more often come up as young kids begin to explore their faith and consider making the decision to follow Christ for the rest of their lives. This class is designed to help your kids navigate these big questions and prayerfully take a step closer to making a decision about their salvation.

8 NEW BELIEVERS CLASS
Putting your faith in Christ doesn’t stop at the decision to do so — it’s a lifelong process of growth and learning! This class is focused on helping you and your kids understand what comes after making a salvation decision and giving them resources to grow in their new faith.



the MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS

Throughout middle school, it often feels like everything's constantly changing — schools, interests, friends, bodies, and even our walk with Jesus. In middle school, kids gain more independence from their parents and start to hear new or mixed messages from the world around them. This creates a unique opportunity for the church to provide truth and help middle schoolers think critically about their faith and how to live it out every day.

middle school **RESOURCES**

HOW TO HAVE A QUIET TIME (6TH GRADE)

This four-week breakout series is designed to help 6th graders learn how and why we spend time with Jesus. They'll also learn how to put that time into practice in their everyday lives through prayer, being in His Word, and cultivating a consistent "quiet time" alone with God.

SEX & DATING SERIES (7TH GRADE)

In this four-week series, students will explore God's beautiful intent for sex and relationships, both romantic and platonic. We'll discover that Jesus didn't come to enslave us with a list of rules, but to help us flourish as we align our entire lives, including our sexual selves, with the Creator's plan.

YOUNG APOLOGETICS (8TH GRADE)

The Bible encourages us to defend our faith and explain our hope in Christ to others: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect," (1 Pet. 3:15). Apologetics can be a tricky balancing act; we never want to be overbearing, but we also shouldn't detach ourselves from the world or be afraid to impact others. This four-week series for 8th graders will help them become confident in God's truth and equip them to engage our culture in respectful, productive ways.





the HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

High schoolers deal with a lot — including struggles with identity, purpose, sexuality, learning who Jesus is, what the Bible has to say, and much more. On top of that, they also face enormous pressure to figure out what they want to do and who they want to be as they head into adulthood. Through the opportunities listed below and more, we want to come alongside your student and family to help disciple and produce a strong, confident follower of Jesus.



high school RESOURCES

- **ANNUAL BIBLE READING PLAN (ALL GRADES)**

We want students to know God's word and live it out together. Using this plan, students will walk through the Bible together and be encouraged and held accountable in their small groups.

- **BIBLICAL NARRATIVE CLASS (9TH & 10TH GRADES)**

The Bible is one overarching story that points to Jesus. We want to make sure our high schoolers understand how each book fits into this bigger narrative and how to approach each text through that lens. This class will help equip our students to properly understand the different writings in the Bible and how they impact the overall story.

- **SEX, DATING, AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS (ALL GRADES)**

We realize the ever-growing pressure students face when it comes to their sexuality, temptations, and living in an over-sexualized culture. In this annual class, we'll address what God's Word has to say about our hearts and lives regarding purity, holiness, and God's design for sex. This will be done in the format of a sermon series, small group questions, at-home parent equipping material, and a parent seminar.

- **IDENTITY SERIES (ALL GRADES)**

The gospel is something we never get over, but in the busyness of life as a high school student it can sometimes be overlooked or forgotten. Every year, to help combat that, we'll have a gospel-centered sermon series to help remind students what the gospel is, who they are because of it, and how it can and should be impacting their lives right now. They'll even practice sharing how the gospel has changed their own lives with their small groups.

- **COLLEGE/CAREER PREP CLASS (12TH GRADE)**

Each spring, we'll offer a four-week equipping class during Sunday morning student services to help prepare our seniors for what's next. Through studying the books *Welcome to Adulthood* by Jonathan Pokluda, we'll look at several realities students will have to tackle head-on within the next few months of their lives. With this series, we want to prepare seniors to step into the next season of life, ready to grow in their faith, stay plugged into a local church, and successfully start adulthood.



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