

THESE COMMANDMENTS
THAT I GIVE YOU TODAY

ARE TO BE UPON 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.
DEUTERONOMY 6:5-7

One
at

“When my 7-year-old decided to trust Jesus with her life,” one earnest mother speaks up, “it was such a great—but everyday—event!”

Her unusual words give one pause: It seems odd to equate a child’s salvation with the everyday. But as this mom continues, her words make sense: “Her decision was magnificent in our eyes—but it came during an ordinary conversation sitting at the dinner table. My husband was simply talking with her, and their conversation progressed so naturally because we’d already been doing daily talks, like taking a walk when it’s raining and talking about God’s creation or his creativeness. So I think it’s great that this amazing event in her life came in the package of an ordinary conversation—which came from so many other ordinary conversations. Her decision wasn’t a surprise to us. We knew what we were looking for. The Legacy Milestones gave us a guide.”



Dr. Brian Haynes, creator of the Legacy Milestones strategy

home a time

by
Jennifer
Hooks

In the din of confusion surrounding the question of effective family ministry, Brian Haynes has quietly found the way. Take a step on the path.

Take a stroll through the rooms and hallways of Kingsland Baptist Church in Katy, Texas, and you'll quickly see evidence of the Legacy Milestones this excited mom is talking about. The Milestones are literally everywhere...inscribed in stone along the walls, woven into the carpet pattern, embedded in the church's mission statement, and carved into the hearts and minds of the congregation members. It's true—stop and ask just about any random churchgoer to explain the Milestones, and you'll get an earful. You'll hear about a model of family ministry that's remarkably effective. Come, look, and listen!



Brian Haynes walks past the plaques indicating the seven milestones

The Departure

For so many churches, the question of effective family ministry has been vexing: What really works? How do churches effectively connect with and equip parents? What does it take to create a sustainable family ministry that stands the test of time?

Churches everywhere have struggled with these questions, striving to follow the mandates of Deuteronomy 6, focusing on making parents their children's primary faith influencers, and working to create dynamic children's ministries that inspire love for God and a yearning for his Word. And yet so many churches have grown frustrated and confused after seasons of trial and error. There are a lot of great ideas out there about family ministry...but few that actually stand the test of time, culture, and sustainability.

Kingsland, however,

believes it's found the answer, an answer that's a true departure from the call for more programs and ministry overhauls so many churches have attempted. And they seem to be onto something. Kingsland's ministry to families is thriving, growing...and enduring. And best of all, parents are thrilled, in lock-step partnership with the ministry, shepherding their children and growing in faith right alongside their kids.

As associate pastor overseeing spiritual formation at Kingsland, Brian Haynes developed the Legacy Milestones with singular purpose: "The basic idea is to create a common path that integrates church and home for the process we call spiritual formation," explains Haynes, who earned a Doctor of Ministry for his work in family ministry and discipleship. "The milestone strategy is simple,

easy, user-friendly. What we've really tried to do is just sync up church and home, so that what Mom and Dad are saying at home, how they're leading and training at home, is simply echoed at church. It's a very simple path of seven milestones that we use to chart spiritual development."

A visit to the welcoming, pristine church quickly reveals a large fan base for the milestone strategy. There's a group gathered—people of all ages and all life stages—who can't wait to talk about their experiences.

"The milestones have affected our family tremendously," chimes in one young father, who says he became a Christian only as an adult after a turbulent childhood. He leans back in a black couch and wraps his arm around his wife's shoulders. "To me, the concept of the milestones is that it's important to mark key points in a child's development. When I learned about it, I thought, *If I'd had that done for me, things might've been different for me.* The Legacy Milestones provides structure for us as parents, and it's biblically based; it's all Deuteronomy 6. And it helps us remember that these transitions in life—we need to mark them and prepare for them."

"The milestones give a family a point to look at, a goal to intentionally work toward,"

agrees his wife. "It helps us be intentional about what we pour into our kids. And, we as a couple have learned to pray together for our children."

"Milestones help you understand that your walk with God is a process, a journey. You can't microwave it; it's not instantaneous," adds an older father in the group.

A Glance at the Map

Undeniably, Kingsland has some remarkable things happening. For starters, a staggering 93 percent of its parents say they capture "God moments" as teaching opportunities with their children. And 72 percent celebrate the Legacy Milestones as they lead their children spiritually. Thirty-five percent lead an intentional Faith Talk at least

weekly. These are amazing—and incredibly encouraging—numbers. It's a rare church that doesn't dream of this level of parent partnership, accountability, and involvement.

So how does all this happen? And how can your ministry learn from Kingsland's revolutionary approach to family ministry? We followed the path to find answers.

• Motivating Factors—

Haynes, who developed the Milestones with his generational team, says the strategy was born out of his desire to redirect what he viewed as a wrong path the church in general has taken.

"The driving motivation of equipping parents and grandparents to be faith influencers in their children's lives comes from the fact that what we've

been doing in church ministry for the past 20 years or more hasn't been producing a generation of kids who become adults who walk with a biblical worldview," says Haynes. "They don't make decisions about marriage differently than anyone else on the face of the planet, they don't make decisions about faith differently,

the legacy milestones

- Milestone 1:** Birth of a Child
- Milestone 2:** Faith Commitment
- Milestone 3:** Preparing for Adolescence
- Milestone 4:** Commitment to Purity
- Milestone 5:** Passage to Adulthood
- Milestone 6:** High School Graduation
- Milestone 7:** Life in Christ

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Parents celebrate Milestone 1: Birth of a Baby (top). A family moment at Kingsland (bottom).

and they don't seek God about the issues in their lives. I see that the church has majored on events and programming, and we then communicate that discipleship takes place inside certain buildings, on certain days of the week. And so it becomes a compartment of kids' lives. What I want to do is get back into the home and equip Mom and Dad or grand-

"Jesus never said, 'Bring your kids to the church so the professionals can lead them spiritually.'"

parents to pour into their kids on a regular basis. In practice, the church somehow forgot that along the way."

"The great hope for our culture and the families and people living in it is, of course,

Jesus Christ," says Haynes. "As pastors, ministers, and Christian leaders, we believe this at our core. Sadly, though, we've forgotten one thing. Jesus never said, 'Bring your kids to the church so the professionals can lead them spiritually.' The plan from the beginning has been for the church and family to work together for the spiritual formation of the next generation."

• **Guiding Factors**—Senior pastor Alex Kennedy enthusiastically embraces the milestone strategy and the goal behind it. He believes that the strategy is effective because it's simple, clear, positive, and a core value of the church.

"Our goal is to say to people walking the path: 'We as a church are going to do everything we can to equip you, resource you, help you—we're going to walk this path together.'" says Kennedy. "When parents think, *Hmm, the children's ministry seems to be laying a foundation for the youth, and the youth ministry seems to be laying the foundation for the adults*, then all of a sudden there's a light-bulb moment: We're all in this together. When you can connect all the dots in a simple format, good things happen. Life's busy and life is crazy. And so rather than being another weight on a family, we want to be part of the solution that says, 'We're going to keep

this simple, but don't miss the beauty of the simplicity. It can change a life.'"

• **Foundational Factors**—The milestones are designed to enhance the important life moments during which

families are turning toward the church and most open to its partnership. The system strategically trains and equips parents to be the primary faith influencers at those key points and in between. Kingsland's Milestone system has these key elements.

Milestones: Kingsland focuses on seven key milestones beginning with the birth of a child to living a life in Christ as an adult. These milestones serve as a road map to a person's entire life.

Milestone Champions: The milestones each have a champion within the ministry. For example, the birth of a child milestone may be championed by a children's or preschool minister. This champion "owns" the milestone and is a key influencer with families in this area. The champion is the parent partner for that particular milestone.

Parent Seminars: Parent seminars are the prerequisite for families to participate in the church event for each milestone. Each seminar is an education tool for parents so they understand what they're committing to for that milestone as the key influencer in their child's life. The goal of parent seminars is for parents to develop "core competencies"—key principles they'll implement in their daily lives. The core competencies are the underlying basis for each milestone.

Church Events: Kingsland has a churchwide event to mark the milestones.

Once families reach one milestone they turn toward the next, which may occur in several months or in several years. The Legacy Milestone strategy allows families to move forward at an individual



A family enjoys a milestone moment.

pace and to enter onto the path at any life stage.

View From the Road

The Legacy Milestone approach to family ministry has been remarkably effective at Kingsland—and Haynes believes it's easily replicable for other churches. That's largely due to its intuitive, natural model. The strategy doesn't rely on a total program overhaul for most churches because they're already recognizing milestones. It doesn't require large numbers of volunteers to sustain it. It doesn't demand a slew of new programs; in fact, quite the opposite. Haynes says any ministry considering this approach must "simplify and eliminate."

"The milestones aren't just a program," adds executive pastor Dayle Lowry, "but a strategy on how we do ministry. We work together as

a staff. We share victories... and we have a clearly identified strategy we're all working toward. And it's exciting to hear that when children make that decision to ask Jesus into their hearts, they're praying with their parents. Now children are sharing their story of salvation with us rather than us telling children about salvation. Mom and Dad understand that it's their calling, responsibility, and privilege to be their child's primary faith influencer."

This strategy transformed the entire church. "Our mission statement now reads: 'Kingsland's quest is to love God, love people, and equip the generations one home at a time,'" says Haynes, who believes that visibility and buy-in from all leadership have helped the wholesale success of the strategy. The message is literally everywhere.

"Part of keeping the idea in front of people is to do it visually and subliminally," says Haynes. "They catch glimpses of the strategy as they walk down the hall at church, surf our website, get coffee in the resource center, or check their email. In a quiet way we're always whispering, 'Remember, seven milestones and a path to walk.'"

Returning Home

Patrick and Shannon McCrory cuddle their infant daughter, Evie, as she con-

tendedly plays with the strings of her Sunday bonnet atop Mom's lap.

"As you think about starting your family, you start thinking, *How in the world are we supposed to do this thing?*" Patrick says thoughtfully. "At Kingsland, with the milestone ministry, we realized there are steps along the way and the church can help us do our job as the primary faith influencer at home. It's been absolutely fantastic to know that we're on this journey with other people and our church," says Patrick.

"The milestones helped us recognize the task before us," adds Shannon, patting Evie's back. "The task ahead is a little overwhelming," she laughs, "but it's an awesome task. And we know we have a partner along the way."

"To any pastor who would be wearied by the thought of taking on another program on his or her plate, I would say, this is not a program," says Kennedy. "It's not an appendage to our church; it is who we are. We equip the generations to walk alongside Christ, one home at a time. If you look at it that way, you're going to be in for the ride of your life. Go back to the simplicity of it: One mom, one dad, one kid, one home at a time." **cm**

Jennifer Hooks is managing editor of *Children's Ministry Magazine*.

get the map

Discover how to develop truly effective family ministry in Brian Haynes' new book *Shift: What it takes to finally reach today's families*. John Trent, president of The Center for Strong Families and author of *The Blessing* says, "You simply must read this book if you're serious about understanding and implementing a model for equipping parents that can work in your home—and your church—today." Use promotional code CR9113 at group.com for 20% off.

