

INVITATION TO

IDENTITY

5TH GRADE

Crossroads Families
A ministry of Crossroads Church

5th grade does not seem real to most parents. Just yesterday we dropped them off for their first day of kindergarten. Your child is excited to finally be at the top of the school food chain, but you know what is next. You know right around the corner, in a matter of days, you will be facing the dreaded middle school years. The unknowns stress most parents and children. New school, new teachers, new rules, new schedule, new responsibilities, and new challenges can be a little overwhelming. We want to help you maximize this final year of elementary school by helping your child discover their identity.

This year, we are inviting your child to the Family Experience called “Invitation to Identity.” A child who knows who they are will have confidence heading into a season of change. Before things begin to shift and they face new voices challenging them to be something they are not, we want you, as a parent, to be able to help your 5th grader discover what makes them stand out above the crowd. God only made one version of your child, so this year, help them discover why that is so important.

We will help you do this by giving you 3 Kick-starters that will build a foundation to begin this year’s Family Experience. These Kick-starters are expounded upon in our Kick-starter Guide and will focus on the fact that your child was made for a purpose, that God has a bigger plan, and they have a need to be authentic. Each of these topics will expose a little piece of your child’s identity. The Kick-starter Guide will have questions and activities for you that set up the Family Experience Ceremony in which we give a symbol reminding them of their identity. You will find tools to help you in planning this experience by going to our Parent

Planning Guide. This experience will be an incredible time for you to bless your child as they head toward their middle school years. First, we want you to present your child with notes from people that they love and respect, which would share with them strong character traits they see in them. You can put these in a special scrapbook if you like, or just give them the notes. Next, we are asking you to think through an identity symbol for your child and give them a gift that connects to the symbol. For our daughter, her identity symbol is the owl, which stands for wisdom. When she sees this symbol she knows that is the trait we see in her. Your symbol and gift will simply need to connect with your child. It could be a gift that will be practical that they will need in middle school, or it could be symbolic like our gift for our daughter. No matter the gift, the important thing is that it connects as a symbol of their identity.

For your 5th grader, this time in school can be difficult, but your child can feel much more prepared as they now have the tool of standing on the identity that God has given them.

An Invitation To Identity

The emotions of a 5th grader can run the gamut. They're at the top of the stack at elementary schools, but there's also a good deal of fear about the middle school years just ahead. With all that uncertainty comes the moment when 5th graders begin to ask themselves, "Who am I, and where do I fit in?" This is a conversation that will continue to be played in their minds well into their teen years. We want to help you set them up to know fully WHO THEY ARE as they face this ongoing question.

Kickstarter 1: Made with Purpose

Read together Psalm 139:13-18:

You created the deepest parts of my being. You put me together inside my mother's body. How you made me is amazing and wonderful. I praise you for that. What you have done is wonderful. I know that very well. None of my bones was hidden from you when you made me inside my mother's body. That place was as dark as the deepest parts of the earth. When you were putting me together there, your eyes saw my body even before it was formed. You planned how many days I would live. You wrote down the number of them in your book before I had lived through even one of them. God, your thoughts about me are priceless. No one can possibly add them all up. If I could count them, they would be more than the grains of sand. If I were to fall asleep counting and then wake up, you would still be there with me.

These are God's thoughts about you. Use the boy/girl graphic and write within it how you would describe yourself, what you are good at, what you like doing, what kind of person you are.

Pray with your child that he/she would see himself/herself as God sees him/her.

Give your 5th grader space to do this alone. Depending on the privacy level of your child, he/she may not want you to see it, may not want you to look at it in front of them, may share openly, etc. You can ask them to leave it on their dresser, and you can look at it during a time that he/she isn't around. They could lay it on the kitchen counter, or they may want to just put it in a safe place. It'd be great for you to know what it contains, but it's more important that the child is honest and does it.

Kickstarter 2: God's Bigger Plan

Ask your child, what are some things you'd love to be able to do in life, what are your big dreams? Lead your child to write some of these on the MY FUTURE page. If they're having trouble thinking of some things, share what some of your dreams were as a kid. It's OK if they did/didn't come true. This is a time for him/her to think big. In Kickstarter 1, the child did the activity alone, do this one together.

Once done read, Jeremiah 29:11:

"I know the plans I have for you," announces the Lord. "I want you to enjoy success. I do not plan to harm you. I will give you hope for the years to come."

Tell your child: God has big plans for you. Right now you may not know exactly what those plans are. What you can do as you wait to know God's plan for your life is follow Him and obey Him. God has given you dreams and passions, and He knows which ones are the right ones to follow, so live for Him today, and He'll guide your tomorrow.

Kickstarter 3: Be Authentic

Ask your child: what do you think it means to be authentic?

Being authentic means not being fake or copying but being real, being YOU. Sometimes all we see is how we are different than others, but God designed us that way. Samuel was given the task of anointing the next king out of Jesse's family. Jesse brings his sons and lines them up in front of Samuel. Read 1 Samuel 16:6-13.

Look at David. He was definitely different. In fact, his Dad didn't even bother having him show up for this time between his sons and Samuel. God sees people very differently than we see ourselves. God chose David because David was different and God knew his heart.

Tell your child God has created them to be different. All those differences are intentional; God chose those qualities for you alone. Have your child take a good, honest look at himself/herself and write down all the ways he/she is unique/different on the "I am me" sheet. You can choose for them to do this alone or with you. Gauge your own child's needs.

Identity Symbol

Ask a few significant people in your child's life to write a letter or card to them with the purpose of telling your child what they see in him/her. Use the questions below to give to the individuals writing cards as a guide.

Parents, take these letters/cards and see if there is a similar thread running through all of them that can guide you in choosing an identity symbol for your child. For instance, if people say your child exhibits wisdom or intelligence, the identity symbol could be an owl. If your child puts a ton of time, energy and persistence into a certain sport, maybe a new piece of sports equipment could be the symbol. Use your imagination as you read the letters, then choose what the symbol will be. Make it, buy it, engrave it, choose to make this as elaborate as you'd like. The idea is to make this symbol very individualized, something that is extremely unique to your child. Here are a few other ideas to get your creative juices flowing:

- Wise/intelligent-owl, set of books
- Athletic-sports equipment
- Kind/compassionate-leather bracelet embossed with words, heart
- Good friend-framed picture of friends
- Fun to be around-smiley face jewelry, joke book that friends/family sign
- Creative-art set, personalized stationary, camera
- Great at technology-new device, program for computer
- Thoughtful-journal

Set aside a time to present your child with the letters/cards and identity symbol. Read the cards with him/her. Give your child the identity symbol and explain the reason you chose this symbol. You can refer to the Identity Symbol script to guide this presentation.

QUESTION GUIDE FOR LETTERS

I'm asking you to write a letter or card to my child as a final piece to a family experience I'm doing with him/her. I'm asking you to contribute because you know my child well, and he/she looks up to you a great deal. It would mean a lot to me if you could take a minute to write him/her a letter or card and include the answers to some of the following questions:

1. What character traits do you see my child exhibiting?
2. What do you see my child being passionate about?
3. What are my child's talents?
4. What makes my child unique?

Fifth graders still want your encouragement, but they will rarely ask for it. This is the year that teasing and gossiping take center stage, and with your child's desire to "fit in," it can lead to a compromise of values. These big shifts make it even more important for you to help your child see how they are designed differently, on purpose.

Physical

- Are maturing physically (Girls are typically ahead of boys in physical maturity. Girls may begin their period.)
- Need outdoor time and need to be challenged physically
- Benefit from snacks and rest periods, due to their rapidly growing/changing bodies
- May require reminders about good hygiene, using deodorant, brushing teeth, etc.

Social and Emotional

- Are capable of developing their own goals
- Are generally balanced
- May shrug off responsibility
- Might still be unable to manage time well; need scheduling
- May stress over academic challenges
- Are beginning to accept responsibility for their own failures and mistakes (Though it may not be articulated, they are beginning to recognize their part in mistakes.)

Relational

- Can independently resolve conflict and help others solve conflict
- Use humor that may not be funny to adults
- Are very talkative
- Enjoy family and peers
- Often need to talk to think

Spiritual

- Are better able to see others' perspectives; have more of a global view, which facilitates empathy
- Test levels of independence (This may be greater for boys than girls.)
- Become dependable and trustworthy (great characteristics for friends and family!)
- Will need help figuring out the balance of social time, school time, family time, hobby time, etc.
- Are sensitive to and able to resolve issues of fairness

Our hope is that during the past year, you have been able to teach your fifth grader how to figure out who they are.

In order to encourage other parents, we would love to hear about your your journey teaching your child about their identity and how that experience has impacted your relationship with God and your family.

Feel free to send us an email, make a video, or send us a copy of your story, Bible verse, song, or prayer so that we can better encourage other parents. Thank you for taking this journey with us and we pray that God continues to work in your life and the life of your child.

SEND RESPONSES TO:

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