

THE BIG BED

EXPERIENCE

THREE YEARS OLD

Crossroads Families  
A ministry of Crossroads Church

Many times, when a family is welcoming a new baby, one of the first supplies they make sure they have is the crib. Of all the baby gear you have, the crib is also one of the last things to go as your child grows. We all know that feeling when you realize your child has become too big for a crib. Maybe they climbed out by themselves, or maybe you have a new baby on the way, and they need the crib. As much as you hate to admit it, your baby is growing up, and it is time to move them to a new bed.

Regardless of whether you choose a toddler bed, twin bed, rails, no rails, race car bed, whatever...this is a huge milestone in your child's life! It is also a major adjustment for you as a parent because there was security in that crib.

When you put them to bed, they stay put, and they are safe for the night. What if they fall out of the bed, what if they aren't ready, what if I'm not ready? It's a scary adjustment for you and them.

We want to help you to create a Family Experience to help you transition your child to their big kid bed. Maybe you have already taken this step, and maybe they're not ready yet. Either way, you can still participate. This Family Experience is called "The Big Kid Bed," and leads you in choosing scripture and prayers for them to literally lie down on each night.

This is a very exciting change. Every child at this age wants to be a big kid and what's a better symbol that you think they are a big kid than blessing them with a big kid bed. We will be providing you with three Kickstarters to lead you through this journey. They will help you to see the importance of this bed. The Kickstarters will cover dream time, sleep time, and talk time.

They will have questions and activities for you to do with your child that set up the Family Experience. Once you have laid the foundations of why this bed is important, you are ready for the Age 3 Family Experience and the Parent Guide will give you step-by-step instructions to make this ceremony special.

Once your child's bed is in their room, you will decide how you want to incorporate the Family Experience. You can design this however you want. You may want to write on the slats of the bed or tuck verses under the mattress or in their pillowcase. We will give you some scriptures and samples of prayers to read, and that way you can choose the ones that appeal to you and your family. You can keep this a private experience or include others if you wish. We want the occasion of a new bed to be an exciting milestone for you and your child.

We chose this moment in their life because it is a significant turning point. They are not a baby anymore. We feel this Family Experience can be a special time of growth, communication and prayer for your family as your child begins their own journey toward being a big kid.

## The Big Kid Bed

Moving from the crib to a big kid bed is a big step. **A child's bed is the place where dreams, rest, and incredible conversations occur.** This Family Experience guides parents through a big kid bed ceremony where the family writes Scriptures on pieces of paper and tucks them under the mattress. Then they invite their big kid to sit in the bed while the family prays for them. This Family Experience might take place earlier or later than the third year, but it will help infuse faith into an important transition.

## Kickstarter 1: Dream Time

Neuroscientists believe children begin dreaming when they're able to imagine. Dreaming and imagination go hand in hand. Is your child beginning to make pretend sounds as he/she zooms the car on the floor? Do they talk to their stuffed animals? Are they playing with an imaginary friend? If your child is doing these things, you can guarantee he/she is dreaming.

Some of these dreams are pleasant, and some can be scary for a little one. Even though your child has the ability to imagine, he/she probably is unable to distinguish between reality and fantasy, so that monster they imagine is VERY REAL to them! As a parent, how can we encourage "sweet" dreams and help our child deal with the ones that are scary to them?

One of the best ways is to limit exposure to scary things. Think wicked step-mother in Snow White - she's SCARY! Some children are more easily frightened than others. Make sure you know your child's personality to know what it is that scares them. Some kids are terrified of clowns, some are not. Some children think the wolf blowing down the pig's houses is funny, others get freaked out. Know your kiddo well, and take cues from him/her.

An incredible verse to cling to when it comes to praying over a scared child having bad dreams is:

And For the Spirit God gave us does  
not make us timid, but gives us  
power, love and self-discipline.

**2 TIMOTHY 1:7**

The LORD is with me; I will  
not be afraid. What can mere  
mortals do to me?

**PSALM 118:6**

Helping a child deal with his/her scary dreams is a great time to help them understand the comfort and love of God. Remind them God will care for them, and NO ONE is bigger or stronger than Him.

## Kickstarter 2: Sleep Time

Sleep is a wonder idea from God for parents and children. We spend 1/3 of our lives sleeping. Maybe you've asked, why did God create sleep? We could get so much more done if we didn't need to spend 7-8 hours in each 24 hour period asleep.

*"In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat— for he grants sleep to those he loves."*

**PSALM 127:2**

According to this simple verse, God gives us sleep because He loves us. If you look closely at this verse you realize the opposite of sleep is anxiety. We can have incredible sleep and rest when we fully trust that God can handle anything and everything in our lives.

What is it that you anxiously worry about? What keeps you up at night? Let's give those things to God, allowing Him to work out the details that we so often fret over.

What about your child? What does he/she worry most about? What causes your child to lose sleep? Spend some time giving these things to God so that you can sleep well, resting completely in His love for you.

## Kickstarter 3: Talk Time

Oh, the conversations that will take place over the lifetime of a child in his/her bed! When it's time to tuck your child in, you can guarantee that's when he/she is ready to talk about anything and everything. If you capitalize on this moment, you'll create for yourself an open invitation for honest conversation between you and your child for the rest of his/her life.

In the therapy world, the term "unconditional positive regard" is often used. This simply is the complete acceptance of a person, regardless of what the person says or does. In order to assure constant communication with your child, one of the best things you can do NOW is to decide to have unconditional positive regard for your child. As they struggle through different life stages, the best thing we can do is be present and loving in the moment.

Take a moment to read 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter. As you read each verse stating what love is, take a moment to reflect on yourself. Which of these would most likely be the stumbling block between your child having great conversation with you? Are you easily irritated with your child? Do you insist on your own way? (v.5)

In order to have a lifetime of honest conversation with our child, we need to LOVINGLY guide them through life. They will make choices that disappoint us, do things that break our hearts, and our response in these moments will determine their willingness to talk with us over the rest of their lives.

You may not be able to think about conversations with your child revolving around boyfriends/girlfriends, a friend hurting their feelings, deciding which college to attend, etc., but if you begin with honest and loving conversation now, you'll set yourself up for success in assuring your child to talk to you about the hard times and the good times.

## Big Kid Bed Family Experience

Now that you've gone through the three Kickstarters, hopefully you're able to envision the hope and promise held in a child's bed. From sweet dreams to peaceful rest to significant conversations, the big kid bed is the location for some of your child's most precious moments. In order to carry out the big kid ceremony, you'll need to take the following steps.

1. Once your child's big kid bed is in place, decide if you want to write verses or a prayer on slips of paper to:

1. tuck under the mattress
2. write on the wooden slats that go under the mattress
3. write on a pillowcase he'll/she'll sleep on
4. another idea you come up with on your own

2. Select verses or a prayer that you like. See the list below for ideas.

1. 2 Timothy 1:7
2. Psalm 118:6
3. Proverbs 3:24
4. Psalm 4:8
5. Isaiah 40:28
6. Romans 8:28
7. Matthew 11:28-30
8. Jeremiah 29:11
9. Lamentations 3:22-23
10. Psalm 37:4-5

### SAMPLE PRAYERS:

Dear God,

We know this bed will be a place where \_\_\_\_\_ will have sweet dreams, peaceful rest, and a place where we'll have significant conversations. We pray that you will guard his/her dreams and ask that he/she would be able to sleep in peace because he/she grows to trust you.

Help us as parents to have conversations in this bed that will honor you and help \_\_\_\_\_ to know you so that one day he/she can choose to follow you.

- Amen

You can keep this Family Experience intimate with just your immediate family. However, if you have very close friends or family you'd like to make part of the experience, feel free. During the time you can have them write verses or prayers for your child on the wooden boards, sheets of paper, etc. You also could have your child sit on the bed as you read through the verses or scripture.

## Physical

**Gross Motor:** Show coordination skills while moving around and engaging in play activities. Fling a ball in an attempt to throw it towards target; pushes friend on riding toy; climb steps of slide; walk on broad balance beam or edge of walkway; imitate a variety of movements (runs, walks, gallops, jumps); jump with both feet.

**Fine Motor:** Demonstrate eye-hand coordination while manipulating and exploring objects. Poke, pound and build with play dough and other sculpting materials; scribble with a variety of instruments beginning to use thumb and fingertips grasp; use wrist rotation to fit puzzle piece into puzzle; unscrew lids to pour from one container to another; and pull apart pop beads or connecting blocks with ease.

## Social and Emotional

**Self Concept:** Shows an emerging sense of self. Has growing sense of separateness; seek and find pride in developing skills that encourage independence (washing own hands, putting on own coat); realize reflection in the mirror is his.

**Self Control:** Demonstrate increased skill in identifying and expressing feelings. Verbally state wants and needs (“I want that”, “mine”, “I’m thirsty”); begin to understand behaviors that hurt self or others (exclaims “no” when another child attempts to hit or bite).

**Cooperation:** Begin to gain a sense of mastery and achievement. Try new experiences; repeat a newly gained skill and seek positive response for achievements from adult (looks at caregiver after completion of task to see response).

## Relational Spiritual

Around this age, children are old enough to understand simple things in the bible such as the theme God’s Creation. Take your children for walks and look at different things in nature and talk about them.

Start out with Genesis 1:1 and while walking look at all the things in nature. Then ask your child questions like; Who made that tree? Did daddy make the tree? No. Did mommy make the tree? No. God made the tree. He is the creator. He is the only one who has power to make things live and who can make the world.

Then sing songs relating to what you are talking about such as, In the Beginning God Made the Earth.

Our hope is that during the past year, you have had great bedtime talks with your three year old and together found the perfect place to write your verses or prayers.

In order to encourage other parents, we would love to hear about your experience with the big bed experience and how that experience has impacted your relationship with God and your toddler.

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:**

Kiki McDaniel

Director of Children's Ministries

[k.mcdaniel@xroadschurch.net](mailto:k.mcdaniel@xroadschurch.net)

