



WELCOME TO THE BIG KID BED

Moving from the crib to a big kid bed is a huge step. A child's bed is the place where dreams, rest, and incredible conversations occur. This Milestone Experience includes an opportunity for you to **ENGAGE** with the Bible as you learn more about your child's dream time, sleep time, and talk time. This Milestone Experience also provides a time for you to **AFFIRM** your child by presenting him or her with a gift, a special pillowcase which has a meaningful verse and symbols to remind your son or daughter that God is always there. Your little one is growing up and it is time to celebrate this important milestone by welcoming your child to the big kid bed!

STEP 1: PREPARE

We want to equip you to maximize this Milestone Experience with your child. First read through the full Milestone Experience Guide so you know what to expect. The **ENGAGE** section will aid you in thinking through this transition from a crib to a big kid bed from your child's perspective as well as give you scriptures to guide your child through this time. On your child's first night in his or her big kid bed, you will have an opportunity to **AFFIRM** your child with a special pillowcase that you can purchase from our church resource center. We have included ideas on how to capitalize on this moment in our **AFFIRM** section below. We are excited to partner with you for this milestone as you welcome your child to the big kid bed.

STEP 2: ENGAGE

THINK THROUGH 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 or she zooms the car on the floor? Do she talk to her stuffed animals? Is he playing with an imaginary friend? If your child is doing these things, you can guarantee he or 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 or she is probably unable to distinguish between reality and fantasy, so that monster your child imagines is **VERY REAL** to your child! As a parent you can encourage "sweet" dreams and help your child deal with the ones that are scary to him or her.

One of the best ways is to limit exposure to scary things. Think about the wicked stepmother in Snow White—she is **SCARY!** Some children are more easily frightened than others. Make sure you know your child's personality to know what it is that scares him or her. Some kids are terrified of clowns, some are not. Some children think the wolf blowing down the pigs' houses is funny, others not so much! Know your child well, and take cues from him or her.

It is also helpful to begin a nighttime routine if you don't already have one. Consistency is key to helping your child settle down for the night. The consistency that you provide for your son or daughter in this nighttime routine will help your child build trust and confidence. Perhaps you would like to give your child a bath and then read a Bible story from a children's bible together and pray. This is a great time to remind them that God made them, God loves them, and Jesus wants to be their friend forever!

THESE THREE INCREDIBLE VERSES ARE HELPFUL WHEN IT COMES TO PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR SWEET DREAMS OR PRAYING OVER A SCARED CHILD HAVING BAD DREAMS:

- *2 Timothy 1:7 // For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*
- *Psalm 118:6 // The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*
- *Psalm 4:8 // In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, will keep me safe.*

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

THINK THROUGH SLEEP TIME

Sleep, glorious sleep! Hopefully if your child is ready to transition to a big kid bed, he or she is sleeping through the night. Let's take a moment to remember what it was like to get up multiple times in one night, living life in that constant state of groggy!

Sleep is a wonderful idea from God for parents and children. We spend one third 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 seven to eight hours in each 24 hour period asleep.

Psalm 127:2 states, *It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.*

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.

Take a quiet moment alone to think through these questions and write down your thoughts in a notebook or journal.

1. What is it that you anxiously worry about?
2. What keeps you up at night?

Take some time to give those things to God through prayer. Allow Him to work out the details that we so often fret over.

3. What about your child? What does he or she worry most about?
4. What causes your child to lose sleep?

Spend some time giving these things to God in prayer so that you can sleep well, resting completely in His love for you.

Also, this is the time to consider the rules of the big kid bed. Will you allow your child to get out of bed when he or she wakes up in the morning or do you want your child to remain in the bed looking at books until you come? What if your child needs to use the bathroom? Work together to create one to three simple rules to guide your child. You might want to write these out and draw pictures that depict these rules to help your child remember them. It is helpful to phrase these positively rather than negatively. For example, "stay in" instead of "don't get out."

THINK THROUGH TALK TIME

Oh, the conversations that will take place over the lifetime of a child in his or her bed! When it's time to tuck your child in, you can guarantee that's when he or 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 your son or daughter's life.

Take a moment to read 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7. *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

As you read each verse stating what love is, take a moment to reflect on yourself. Write down your thoughts in a notebook or journal.

1. Which of these would most likely be the stumbling block between your child having a great conversation with you?
2. Are you easily irritated with your child? Do you insist on your own way?

In order to have a lifetime of honest conversations with your child you will want to lovingly guide him or her through life. Your child will make choices that disappoint you, do things that break your heart, and your response in these moments will determine his or her willingness to talk with you over the rest of your life. As your child struggles through different life stages, the best thing you can do is be present and loving in the moment.

Since your child is still young, it is hard to imagine that one day you will have conversations revolving around boyfriends or girlfriends, a friend hurting your son or daughter's feelings, or even deciding which college to attend. If you begin with honest and loving conversations now, you'll set yourself up for success in assuring your child always talks with you about the good times and the hard times. So many of those precious conversations will likely take place in your child's big kid bed.

STEP 3: AFFIRM

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.

Now that you have **ENGAGED** with scripture to learn more about your child's dream time, sleep time, and talk time you are ready to present your child with his or her special pillowcase.

You can choose to keep this Milestone Experience intimate with just you and your child or your immediate family. However, if you have very close friends or family you'd like to make part of the experience feel free to do so.

On the night that your child moves into his or her big kid bed gather together for your nighttime routine. Sit together on the new bed. Give your child the pillowcase and ask your son or daughter to tell you about the symbols or pictures on the pillowcase. Point out the symbols depicted in the verse. Read the verse out loud and as your child is able have them repeat the words after you.

Psalm 4:8 // *In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, will keep me safe.*

You may even want to take a picture of your child on his or her first night in the new bed. Your child will love looking back on that moment years later. Tell your child you want to pray for him or her. You may want to pick your child up and hold him or her as you sit together on the new big kid bed and pray together. The feeling of touch and safety as you pray together is a reflection on God's care for your child!

Close your time before bed in prayer.

SAMPLE PRAYER

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 will grow 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

Finally, as you leave the room on this big milestone, we know you will anxiously listen and wait to see if your child stays in the bed. Take a moment as parents to celebrate this big milestone by enjoying a quiet moment together over dessert. Tis is YOUR milestone too! Your baby has taken a big step and you have too! Congratulations on helping to welcome your child to the big kid bed!