

# INVITATION TO IDENTITY

Eleven years old does not even seem real to most parents. Just yesterday we dropped them off for their first day of kindergarten and now they are often in their final year of elementary school. 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 be facing the dreaded middle school years. The unknowns ahead stress out most parents and children. New school, new teachers, new rules, new schedule, new responsibilities, and new challenges can be a little overwhelming. This year 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 discover their identity. When a child knows who they are they can have confidence headed 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 eleven your old discover what makes them stand out above the crowd. This year you have the chance while their hearts are open to you to express what you see in your child and in the process they will discover their identity.

# **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.

## **QUESTION GUIDE FOR LETTERS**

I'm asking you to write a letter or card to my child as a final piece to a rite of passage experience I'm doing with them. 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?



Then 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 by 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 at you'd like. The idea is to make this symbol very unique, something that is specific 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.



# **IDENTITY SYMBOL PRESENTATION SCRIPT**

I've enjoyed studying with you about identity and figuring out WHO you are. We've asked a few people who know you best to write a letter to you telling about the kind of person that you are and what they see in you. Let's read those letters...

(read the letters together)

You can see through all these that one big idea keeps coming up and that is X. We want you to have a symbol that will remind you that X is what people see in you.

(present the symbol)

We are proud to know that God has created you with a purpose, He has big plans for you, and He has created you to be uniquely you. Our prayer is that you'll see all the ways that you're different as HOW God created you.

You have been uniquely created to complete God's purpose for you.

As you grow up, you'll continue to realize your differences and God's purpose for you. As you do, we hope you'll follow His path for you because He has created you to be X (attribute associated with identity symbol).



# **ELEVEN YEAR OLD ACTIVITIES**

The emotions of an eleven 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 eleven year olds 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. These are activities to do throughout the year to reinforce that identity symbol that was created.

## **ACTIVITY 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. Have them draw a silhouette of themselves and write within it how you would describe yourself, what are you good at, what do 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 eleven year old 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.



# **ACTIVITY 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 grab a piece of paper and write, "MY FUTURE" at the top of the page. Then they can write down those big dreams under the heading. 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 ACTIVITY 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 now. 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.



# WHAT'S GOING ON WITH MY 11 YEAR OLD?

Eleven year olds 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. Here are some of the developmental changes they are experiencing right now.

#### **EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Your eleven year old may:

- 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 DEVELOPMENT

- 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

#### PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- 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.

## SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

- 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