



# FAITH MILESTONES

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This year, Easter falls in March. How will your family celebrate?

Will you leap right over Good Friday and the crucifixion and get on to the triumphant celebration of Easter morning, the lilies, the Hallelujah Chorus, the family gathering, the chocolate overdose?

After all, what can you say to a young child about Jesus' death? It might frighten them. It might mean they'll ask questions about death, about what I believe, about ... oh, this could open a can of worms.

Or, it could be one of those cherished moments when we have the opportunity to talk, really talk with our kids about the most important things in our lives. It might be a chance to talk about Luther's great question, "What does this mean?" (And, Luther really meant, "What does this mean to me today, right here, right now?") It doesn't mean that we adults have all of the answers. It means that we have the high holy privilege of having faith conversations with the children and youth who are important in our lives.

A faith milestone is a marker along life's journey that says, "This is something important and God is here, too." It is time to pause, to celebrate, to share the joys and sorrows, to give and receive support, to reflect on where and how we have found God in our story.

Most of us grew up in households and congregations that did not name faith milestones or mark them. Most of us marked some of them ... but we may not have looked for what God might be doing with us. We didn't see them all as markers on our faith journey. We can begin today being deliberate about looking for opportunities to name and claim God's presence in the new, the changing times in our lives.

What are some faith milestones? There are the ones we do in the life of our faith community — baptism, baptism birthdays, receiving a first Bible, starting Sunday School, learning to pray, first communion, confirmation, a mission trip, wedding, funeral.

There are milestones that are part of the rhythm of our life together — birthdays, family gatherings, holidays, vacations, starting school. Then there are those faith milestones that rise up in the dailiness of our life together — getting a new pet, burying a pet, celebrating a pregnancy or birth or adoption, grieving the anniversary of the death of a beloved friend or family member, moving into a first house or moving Gramma into assisted living. All of these are opportunities to find God in our lives.

How do we mark milestones? Try this:

- Come together.
- Name the milestone.
- Offer a blessing.
- Support the milestone with an appropriate gift.

## Family Activities

1. For the next family birthday, plan a gathering. Celebrate the gifts this person brings to the family. Pray, giving thanks for the birthday person. Give a gift that reflects their values and passions.
2. Pick one new faith milestone you will celebrate as a family. Plan how you will mark that milestone.
3. As you plant your garden this summer, bless the seeds or seedlings as a sign of God's faithfulness in the seasons and in the fruitful abundance of our lives.
4. Help a youth celebrate a new driver's license, blessing the new driver. Bless the parent, too.
5. Use a Milestones Blessing Bowl (a resource of The Youth & Family Institute) to uncover new faith milestones in your family.