



Back
to
School



“The larger the island of knowledge, the longer the shoreline of wonder.”
– Ralph W. Sockman

Back to School Milestone Moment

Milestones Ministry brings an awareness of the presence of God to individuals of all generations by recognizing the home as church, too. A Milestone Moment brings family and friends together to mark a special time in their lives and to acknowledge and affirm God’s presence in their midst. Milestone Moments provide a model for connecting significant occasions in people’s lives with the ongoing journey of faith.

The beginning of a school year is an important time to connect students with family and friends in a supportive environment that brings together personal stories, hopes, fears, and the life of faith. Students and parents may be anxious and new schedules and activities may need to be clarified and woven into daily routines. Time with family and friends will often change from summer to fall schedules. All of this and more creates an awareness of a new beginning that needs to be marked as a time of transition for many people, not simply just the students. This Milestone Moment allows for a special time to mark the beginning of the school year as part of the life of faith.

Milestones Ministry uses a simple structure that includes naming, equipping, blessing, gifting, and reinforcing so that the Milestone Moment will have a greater chance to take deeper root in one’s lifelong faith formation.

Moments that cause us to pause and shift gears like beginning a new school year happen in our daily lives. Providing opportunities to find God’s presence in these moments is important. This Back to School Milestone Moment incorporates a simple structure that includes:





Naming – It is important to recognize the changes that take place with a new school year and to acknowledge how God is part of these new routines, experiences, and relationships.

Equipping – This Milestone Moment uses the Four Keys for practicing faith outline (see page 2) to connect the beginning of a new school year with the life of faith.

Blessing – Praying for student(s), family, and friends is a great way to affirm God’s presence at the beginning of the school year.

Gifting – Giving a tangible gift like a card with a special note of encouragement is a good way to help participants be reminded of the significance of this milestone.

Reinforcing – It is beneficial to meet again a couple of weeks after the beginning of the school year to check in and see how the experience is going for the student(s) and family. Be prepared to learn of surprising experiences and feelings that may not have been articulated before. It is also helpful to check in with the student(s) periodically throughout the year. (See page 2, left column.)

 Caring Conversations	 Devotions	Four Key Faith Practices	 Service	 Rituals and Traditions
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Back to School Milestone Moment

For a Small Group or Family Gathering



Growing People in Faith when at Home and Away

“and talk about them when you are at home and when away, when you lie down and when you rise.”

– Deuteronomy 6:7b

A follow up for the Back to School Milestone Moment can be done with caring conversations and prayers about how the school year is going, the excitements, challenges, and fears that have been experienced. It also gives parents, grandparents, other relatives, and friends the opportunity to share their own school-year stories and be present to guide and support the student(s) along the way. This follow up is best done periodically throughout the school year.

An important step after experiencing the Four Keys for practicing faith in a small group or family gathering is to continue to practice the Four Keys on a regular basis. Engaging in caring conversations, devotions, service, and rituals and traditions promotes lifelong faith formation in the home.

A suggested resource for continued caring conversations:

*[Taking Faith Home](#)
[Taking Faith Home Cards](#)*

*Additional Milestone Modules and Moments can be found at:
www.milestonesministry.org*



At the heart of equipping people for their lifelong faith formation are the Four Keys. These faith practices are central to every Milestone and integrated into people’s daily lives as well as the life of the larger church. These four daily faith practices are simple, doable, and practical: Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals and Traditions. Faith in Jesus Christ is at the center of our lives, including the lives of students and those who care for them. The next page is a discussion guide handout to assist with the conversations.



As you gather together, begin by sharing a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your lives and then use the outline below to talk about faith and God’s presence in this moment.



Caring Conversations

Discuss the following questions:

- Tell stories of past experiences of school.
- What are your joys and concerns as you or your loved one goes back to school?
- What are some words of wisdom from family and friends?



Devotions

Read the following:

[G]uarding the paths of justice and preserving the way of his faithful ones. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; Proverbs 2:8-9 (NRSV)

God’s wisdom is linked to a life of justice.

How does learning in school help you become wise?

Give examples of how a wise heart shows fairness to others.



Service

Going back to school can be a scary time for students. When have you been scared or worried about school? Look for someone in your class or on the playground who might need a kind word or act of support and seek to be a servant of God’s love to that person.



Rituals and Traditions

Lay your hands on each student and pray for her or him.

Pray together: *Dear God, help us to gain wisdom and understanding so that we can do what is right and honest and fair. We pray for all students, staff, and teachers in our schools. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*

Conclude with the Lord’s Prayer.

Gather around the student(s) and bless them:

May God bless you with wisdom and strength so that you may do what is right and honest and fair. In the name of Jesus who also grew in wisdom and strength. Amen.



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Back to School Discussion Guide



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