

Milestones of Blessing

In 1 Samuel 7:12 it says, "Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer [literally means 'Stone of Help'], saying, 'Thus far the Lord has helped us.'" This was a significant moment in the history of the people of Israel, when God specifically intervened on their behalf, and Samuel wanted to make sure that the people did not forget it.

Likewise, there are many monuments, or milestones, of blessing in our lives. Some are moments that will be unique to our own situation, but there are many other milestones that we all commonly share. It's these moments that we want to recognize and celebrate as a gathered community of Christ. Let's look at them individually:

Conception—The blessing of a new life in our midst is something we want to celebrate! In addition, we want to commit our prayers and intercession to the couple as they anticipate this new life and pray for the pregnancy to come to full fruition.

Birth/Dedication—As Hannah dedicated Samuel to the Lord, so we celebrate as the parents dedicate each new child to the Lord. This is a truly wonderful moment to celebrate the unique blessing the child brings and to pray prophetically over the baby its special identity and destiny.

Water Baptism—Just as we celebrate new physical birth, so we rejoice in new spiritual birth! We rejoice when an individual has reached the point that he or she has decided to follow Jesus Christ for themselves.

Young Adult Blessing—1 John 2:12-14 clarifies that children transition to young adults (the terms "adolescent" or "teen" are completely foreign to the Bible). Thus, we want to publicly recognize and celebrate every young person when they turn 12, just as Jesus emerged from obscurity in the Scriptures at age 12. In addition, as the parents determine the appropriate moment for each child, we want to support each "Coming of Age" ceremony that affirms the child has now become a young adult.

Courtship/Marriage—Beyond the decision to choose Christ as one's Savior, the person one chooses for a life partner is unarguably the second most important decision an individual will ever make. This decision should not be done "in a vacuum," hastily, or ill-advisedly. Rather, we encourage the parents to be significant partners through this entire process. As the community of Christ, we want to celebrate and pray with a young couple that announces their courtship, asking God to clarify His will for their lives. When the time for marriage arrives, we want to add our blessings to those of the parents, as a new household is now created.

Milestone Birthdays/Anniversaries—The Bible paints a vivid picture of parents blessing their children, but also of children giving honor and tribute to their parents. Each significant birthday/anniversary is a time for great celebration, and it gives both the children and the church body an opportunity to "rise up and bless" the individual/couple for the ways that their lives are changing the lives of others.

Celebration of Life—Should the Lord tarry, each of us will experience a transition from this life to eternity. As sad as this moment can be, yet this is also a wonderful time for the family and church to rejoice in how one life can truly make a difference and leave a legacy to be remembered for generations.

Life is designed to be celebrated, because in doing so we honor and celebrate the Giver of Life. Let's be a community of faith that vigorously remembers and honors those key milestones of blessing that take place in our midst!

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