



*Count your life by smiles, not tears.  
Count your age by friends, not years.*

## Birthday 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. Celebrating a birthday is such an occasion.

Birthdays mark the anniversary of someone’s birth. Each year brings a time to reflect on the past and look to the future with hopes for the year to come. Families and countries recognize particular birthday years as stepping stones in one’s life. In Mexico and Latin America, a young girl’s 15th birthday is called the *quincenera*. It signals a time when a girl becomes a young woman. In Japan, there is a festival called *shichi-go-san* (3-5-7) for boys and girls. The 60th birthday and each decade after are also celebrated as special “ages” in one’s life. In the United States, turning 16 means being able to drive and turning 18 or 21 is widely celebrated as entering adulthood. People often celebrate the decade birthdays like 30, 40, 50, and beyond. Family recipes and special birthday cakes adorned with candles are a custom for celebrating around the world.

Birthdays are a time to celebrate the life of someone who is special to you. Every year brings new hopes and dreams. Providing an opportunity to recognize God’s presence in this moment is important.

This Birthday Milestone Moment provides an opportunity for family and friends to gather together to celebrate a honored person’s birthday. Milestones Ministry uses a simple five stage structure so that the Milestone Moment will have a greater chance to take deeper root in one’s lifelong faith formation.



**Naming** – It is important to recognize a birthday. Whether the person is becoming a teen or turning 90, it is a time to celebrate and name this special occasion.

**Equipping** – This Milestone Moment encourages caring conversations that help create memories for all generations and honor the birthday person through scripture and prayer.

**Blessing** – Blessing the honored birthday person at this special time in their life provides memories for years to come.

**Gifting** – Giving a tangible gift like a framed picture, a birthday stone for gifting, or special gift to honor the occasion will be a visual reminder of this special day for the birthday person.

**Reinforcing** – It is a good idea to follow up after the Birthday Milestone Moment by sharing memories and having caring conversations during visits with the honored person in the future.

 Caring Conversations
  Devotions
  Four Key Faith Practices
  Service
  Rituals and Traditions





# Birthday 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 Birthday Milestone Moment can be done with caring conversations to remember this special day and revisiting the basket full of acts of kindness to talk about what has been done. In what ways have the acts of kindness been a gift to the birthday person or to someone else. Stay in touch with the person who was honored through a phone call or visit.*

*An important step after experiencing the Four Keys for practicing faith in the small groups or home setting is to bless and equip friends and families to continue practicing faith by using the Four Keys daily as an intentional step to encourage faith traditions 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](http://www.milestonesministry.org)*



At the heart of equipping people for their lifelong faith formation are the Four Key Faith Practices: Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals and Traditions. As you celebrate an individual's birthday, think about how that person's life has been filled with the love of God through family and friends. Let this Birthday Milestone Moment be a time to celebrate the birthday person's life through Christian faith, hope, and love. 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 these thoughts and questions:

- Birthday person: Tell us some of the joys, challenges and blessings you have experienced.
- Guests: Tell a story about the birthday person.
- Birthday person: What hopes do you have for the future?
- Guests: What hopes do you have for the birthday person?



### Devotions

Read the following: *This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.* Psalm 118:24 (NRSV)

God is the creator of all life, including the gift of this day.

- Talk about how this day is a gift from God.
- How has the birthday person been a gift to you?

Pray: *Dear God, today we especially thank you for the gift of (name), who is celebrating his/her birthday. We thank you for (name) and for your love for all through the gift of this day. May we respond with joy for the life of (name) and for the gift of life we all share together. In the name of Jesus Christ, your only Son born into the world that we may have life in his name. Amen.*



### Service

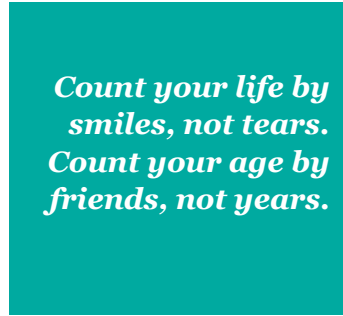
Think of an act of kindness that can be done for the birthday person or be done to honor the birthday person at some point within the next year and write it on slips of paper. Place the slips in a basket and gift them to the honored person.



### Rituals and Traditions

Before the traditional birthday cake and opening of gifts, bless the birthday person. Surround the person and hold hands or lay hands on the honored person and bless them:

*May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord teach you to count each day so that you may gain a heart of wisdom.* (Psalm 90:12)



# Birthday Discussion Guide



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.



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