

Technology Milestone for Youth

What Is A Milestone?

A faith milestone is a marker along life's journey that says, "This is something important and God is here, too." Marking a milestone is a biblically-based spiritual practice in both home and congregation, that helps all generations recognize God's presence in all of life.

Why a technology milestone?

We find technology in nearly every aspect of our daily lives—especially in the lives of our teenagers. All of us are continually plugged into the internet and social networks—technologies which have completely saturated our daily lives and work.

And yet, as pervasive as these technologies and digital media are, we don't really talk about them in church.

In this digitally-integrated time, churches need to take seriously and engage in conversation at the intersection of faith and technology for all ages, but especially youth. As our youth live more of their lives online, they will also live out their faith there too. If we don't engage it, we will miss out on a huge part of their lives . . . and leave them without spiritual guidance.

Where did this milestone come from?

A group of South Dakota youth directors and ministry leaders gathered at Joy Ranch in Watertown to discuss the importance of technology in today's connected culture and the ways social media, mobile phones, and other devices can be used for ministry.

They worked together to create a way for parents to faithfully discuss with their children the joy, danger, and blessing that technology can be in their lives. What follows is a template for use in your ministry setting however you see fit.

Thank you for joining in this important conversation!

Three components:

1. Worship
2. Four Key Resource for Home
3. Cross + Generational Event

Worship

The worship component may be used either in worship with your congregation, or as a conclusion to the Cross + Generational Event.

Litany from Psalm 119

L: How can young people keep their way pure?

C: by guarding it according to your word.

L: With my whole heart I seek you;

C: Do not let me stray from your commandments.

L: I treasure your word in my heart,

C: So that I do not sin against you.

L: Blessed are you, O Lord;

C: Teach me how you want me to live.

L: With my lips and my posts and my tweets I declare

C: that which pleases you...and all that comes from you.

L: I delight in your ways, O God;

C: As much as in all my possessions.

L: I will delight in you O God;

C: I will not forget your word!

Scripture

- Ecclesiastes 1: 9-10
- 1 Corinthians 6: 12
- Psalm 19: 7-14

Prayers

The people of God have many ways to communicate: our mouths, our phones, and online networks. We also have many ways to communicate our needs: with sighs too deep for words, through music, spoken words, or quietly in our hearts. Today you are encouraged to “tweet” your prayers to the Lord using the hashtag #flcprayers (for example).

L: Lord in your mercy,

C: Hear our tweets.

Blessing

Communicating God, as these young people grow to serve and communicate you to a world that needs to see you more clearly, help them live for you in all places, whether online or offline.

You are the Lord of facebook, of twitter, of google+, and of all the media that is yet to come. Thank you for calling us into a community of faith and for the many ways we can express this community to the world.

Today, we give thanks for these young people and their use of technology. We pray that by their careful use of these gifts and social media, they can capture and communicate all that you are doing in their lives and share your love with their friends and neighbors.

Lord, guide us all as we proclaim the Gospel, in word, status update, tweet, and deed.

In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Four Key Resources for Home

Caring Conversations

1. Skype or FaceTime your child's grandparents and ask them to tell a story about what technologies were new and cool when they were young.
2. Use the Faith Talk Card app from Vibrant Faith Ministries to have faith conversations at home.
3. Watch the "Follow Jesus" video (<http://youtu.be/oWCaXXXKcHWE>) and discuss:
 - a. What does it mean to follow Jesus?
 - b. What sometimes makes it difficult to follow Jesus?
 - c. How can we invite others to follow Jesus?
4. What are ways social media and technology help us communicate with those we love? How can it hurt those relationships?

Service

1. Go to an assisted living home and help residents set up a Facebook page to stay connected to family and church.
2. Find an online cause (through Facebook or another site) and get involved through online and offline advocacy.
3. Take an "old" person to Best Buy.
4. Have an "Intergenerational Technology" day in the congregation when youth help others understand/set up new technologies.

Rituals and Traditions

1. At night, when putting the phone away pray together:
"Now I lay my phone to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep."
2. In the morning, when receiving the phone proclaim:
"Rise! Shine! Give God the Glory!"

Devotions

Facebook is full of "friends" but the bible also has a lot to say about friends and keeping them close.

Read:

- Job 2: 11-13
- Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12
- Proverbs 7: 17

Pray:

Blessed are you, loving Father, for all your gifts to us. Thank you for your gift of family and friends to be with us in times of joy and sorrow, to help us in days of need, and to rejoice

with us in moments of celebration. Father, we praise you for your Son Jesus, who knew the happiness of family and friends, and the love of Your Holy Spirit. Blessed are you forever and ever. Amen.

Cross + Generational Event

Helping Our Youth Become Digital Disciples

Adapted from Pastor Keith Anderson (www.pastorkeithanderson.net)

Share a meal together

Opening devotion and prayer

First Session: Gregory's iPhone Contract (or covenant)

(www.janellburleyhofmann.com/gregorys-iphone-contract)

Discuss the contract in small groups

- What parts do you think are good? Why?
- What parts are acceptable to you?
- What parts would you change?
- Choose three rules, discuss, and report back to the larger group

Further Discussion

- How do you see good or ill (sinners and saints) in your social networks?
- How is God present in your social networks?

Fill out a blank Facebook profile (<http://goo.gl/8W0kl>)

- What would you like people to know about you?
- What would you share? Or keep private?
- What ways would faith play in your profiles?

Second Session: Digital Disciples

Share Facebook profiles

Small group discussion, report back to large group

- How do you live out your faith online?
- Was God a part of your Facebook profile? Why? Why not?
- How do you share your faith in the real world?
- How do you see other sharing their faith?
- Is religion positive or problematic? How? (Consider prejudices, bullying, etc.)
- Would you accept a friend request from God? Why? Why not?

Small groups: Ask how they would respond to the following status updates:

- I'm so bummed! What gives someone the right to just stand by and watch you get put down? Is it that hard to stand up for what you know is right? So much for my best friend . . .
- Okay – so I brought up all my grades, I've been to class on time every day for a month, and do they let me go to the concert, next Wednesday . . . NOPE!! Life isn't fair! Wish I could trade in my parents . . .

- Like if you think there's no way Jay should have been starting point guard yesterday... A sophomore starting over a senior the last game of the season?! Get real, Coach! And now he's all puffed up like he's so special...random!
- Another bad day . . . Sometimes I wonder if it's all worth it. I mean, it's not like I have any friends. I'm just someone everyone can beat up on. Tired of being a punching bag. Does anyone care?
- So what am I doing Saturday night? I'm going to an event at church! Oh sure – that's much more fun than going to Sam's party, right?! Will I ever have the right to choose for myself? Not while I'm living in this house! What's all the big deal with this church stuff? Do you think God is real? I'm not so sure . . .

Closing Prayer (or worship)