

Milestones of Faith

Leader's Notes and Bible Passages Available Online

How would you define the word “milestone”? Name three specific milestones that you have experienced in your life. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group throughout the study. The leader should give examples of her own to begin discussion. A definition of “milestone” = 1. a stone by the side of a road that shows the distance in miles to a specified place; and 2. an important point in the progress or development of something, a very important event or advance (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/milestone).**

During this Bible study, we will look at milestones in our Christian faith lives, and particularly at the Means of Grace. We will review the truth that our Lord is beside us and guides and directs us in His Word through every mile of this road of life. We will rejoice in our salvation through the perfect life, suffering, and death of our Savior Jesus. We will recognize the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as He sanctifies and renews us in faith day-by-day ... or mile-by-mile!

Opening Prayer: Dear Lord, You have created us and given us talents and abilities. However, we know that we sin and do not use those talents and abilities to Your glory. Our sin separates us from You. Thank You for sending Jesus, the Word made flesh, to be our Savior from sin. We thank You for the Means of Grace that the Holy Spirit uses to renew, sustain, and sanctify us throughout this journey of life. By the power of the Spirit, make us bold to tell the Good News to those around us. Bless our study of Your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Word of the Lord

Can you remember the first time you really heard the Word of God and knew it was for you? Since my dad was a pastor, I remember hearing the Word spoken in worship every Sunday. However, I probably was about 12 years old before I recall listening to that Word and really hearing what God was saying — to me — through its proclamation. I call that a milestone in my faith life. As I have grown in that Word through the years, I have also come to know the importance of the daily study of God's Word, not just on Sunday morning! Each step along the route of being in the Word has strengthened and bolstered my faith.

A children's anthem* uses phrases such as the following to define the Word of the Lord: “a lamp to my feet,” “a light to my path,” “the hope for the world,” and “forever will be giving life to me.” What do we know about God's Word from the following Bible passages: **Have each participant read one of the passages indicated throughout the study — there are many passages — tell them ahead of time what order you will progress around the circle so they have their passage prepared. Suggested answers are in red.**

Luke 24:27 Jesus said that *all* of God's Word is about Him

²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

John 1:1, 14 Jesus is the Word made flesh — true God and true man

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 20:31 The Bible is about Jesus and our salvation through Him – it contains all we need to be saved

³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

2 Timothy 3:14–15 God's Word makes us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 Holy Scripture is inerrant

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Peter 1:21 God the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible — truly God’s Word

²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Read **Hebrews 4:12**. See also **Psalm 119:25** and **1 John 1:9**. According to these passages, what does God’s Word accomplish in us? **Answers should include: God’s Word gives life; is effective; cuts through our soul and spirit, as well as our thoughts and intentions; exposes our sin; is a curb, rule, guide, mirror (the Law); and cleanses us from all unrighteousness for the sake of Jesus (the Gospel). Absolution brings forgiveness of sins.**

Hebrews 4:12:

¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Psalm 119:25:

²⁵ My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word!

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Read **Hebrews 4:14–16**.

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Discuss the following words and simplistic definitions. Do you agree? Why or why not? **Answers will vary, but encourage all to participate in discussion.**

Justice = getting what you deserve

Mercy = *not* getting what you deserve

Grace = getting what you *don’t* deserve

Faith Talk: Share with a partner or the small group what the phrase *the word of God is living and active* (Hebrews 4:12a) especially means to your daily life. **Answers will vary, but encourage all to participate. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.**

Holy Baptism

Do you know the date you were baptized? How could you celebrate that date as one of the most significant events (milestones) in your life? If you don’t know the date, make sure to find out and then celebrate on that day! **Perhaps the leader could share her baptismal date and ideas for celebration.**

The Bible tells us that *baptism ... now saves you* (1 Peter 3:21). Who is at work in Holy Baptism? See **Titus 3:4–5. The Holy Spirit**

⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

What are the life-long benefits of Holy Baptism?

Acts 2:38a and 22:16 Forgiveness of sins

Acts 2:38

³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins ...”

Acts 22:16

¹⁶ And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

Romans 6:3–5 and Colossians 1:13–14 Rescues us from death and the devil

Romans 6:3–5

³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Colossians 1:13–14

¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Mark 16:16 and Titus 3:5–7 Eternal salvation

Mark 16:16a

¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved ...

Titus 3:5–7

⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The Sacrament of the Altar

A milestone of faith could certainly be the day when you for the first time partook of the Lord’s Supper. Do you remember that day? How did you celebrate? Share if you do!

Read **1 Corinthians 11:23–25**. Who instituted the Sacrament of the Altar? **Jesus** When? **On the night He was betrayed — Maundy Thursday**

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

What are the life-long benefits of Holy Communion?

Matthew 26:26–28 forgiveness of sins

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

John 15:5 and Romans 6:8 Life and salvation

John 15:5

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Romans 6:8

⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Romans 8:10 and 1 Peter 2:24 Victory over sin and hell; strength for the new life in Him

Romans 8:10

¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

1 Peter 2:24

²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

1 Corinthians 11:26 Makes a solemn public confession of Christ and of unity in the truth of the Gospel

²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Our Heavenly Home

Paul writes in Philippians 3:13b-14: *But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,* ¹⁴ *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

As we daily use God's Word and Sacraments — the Means of Grace — throughout our lives, what is our ultimate goal ... toward what are we "straining"? **Our eternal life in heaven with our Savior and Lord, a gift of God's grace**

Read the word pictures of heaven given to us in **Revelation 21:1–6** and **Revelation 22:1–5**. What feelings do these pictures invoke? **Answers will vary, but could include: anticipation, hope, joy, peace**
Revelation 21:1–6

¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ⁵And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

Revelation 22:1–5

¹Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Faith Talk: If you were asked to draw a mental picture of heaven in your head, what would it look like? **Answers will vary, but encourage all to participate. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.**

Read **Colossians 3:12–17**. As we look forward to our final steps in life and our ultimate heavenly milestone, what advice does Paul give to us that might keep us from having our “heads *only* in the clouds”? **Live and work in the world and particularly in the church as God’s chosen ones, giving thanks to God.**

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Make a list of the specific beneficial characteristics given in this Bible passage that might be used to walk this Christian road until we reach our heavenly goal. **Compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness, love, peace, thankful, able to teach and admonish, wisdom, singing, do all in the name of Jesus**

Faith Walk:

1. Praise God daily for His love and plan of salvation for us in Jesus Christ.
2. Rejoice in your Baptism and for the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.
3. Begin or continue a daily Bible reading plan.
4. Identify and encourage a fellow sister in Christ through the spoken word, cards, emails, and prayers.
5. ***For further study:*** Look at the life of the Apostle Paul (Saul) and identify the many milestones which marked his life. For starters, see Acts 7:54–60; 8:1–3; 9:1–31; and 22:2–21. See also Romans 1:1; 2 Corinthians 11:21b–33; Galatians 1:11–18; Philippians 3:2–11; and Colossians 1:24–29.

Closing Prayer:

Leader: Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp to my feet

Group: And a light to my path.

Leader: Guide my steps on this road of life.

Group: Direct and lead me in Your Word.

Leader: Lord, remind me through Your Spirit that there is

Group: One hope, one faith, one baptism, and one Father of all.

Leader: Thank You, for making all things new

Group: Because of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Leader: We pray in the name of our Alpha and Omega

Group: The beginning and end! Amen.

[Psalm 119:105; Ephesians 4:4–6; Revelation 21:5–6]

Closing Hymn (sing together): “May We Thy Precepts, Lord, Fulfill” (LSB #698)

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