



The Gift of the FaithChest®

By Dr. Dick Hardel

One of the great tools for passing on the faith that has been developed by The Youth & Family Institute is called a FaithChest® (It is spelled correctly as one word). The Youth & Family Institute suggests that members of a congregation make a FaithChest® for every person baptized. The FaithChest® is to be given at the time of a child's baptism. As the child grows in the faith, the parents store all the resources used to teach and nurture faith at a specific milestone in the child's life. The concept is that when this child matures and is ready to move away from home, the young adult takes with her the FaithChest® full of resources, symbols, and memorabilia to nurture faith. To assist congregations The Youth & Family Institute has put the plans for the FaithChest® on their web site to be downloaded.

The FaithChest® can also be used as a home altar for family devotions. Children can move it to different rooms in the house so that the family can have fun sharing creative devotions in a different room each night. I have enjoyed writing family devotions for different rooms in the house. Instead of candles I have put flashlights in shoes on top of the FaithChest®. Other times I have used glow sticks. In the kitchen I love to use pots and pans and other dishes in a liturgy. My favorite place for devotions with children is in the bathroom. The sound of water flushing, spraying from the shower, or pouring from the faucet in the sink or the tub can be used as a creative response while reciting a Psalm, singing a song, or even celebrating God's grace. While bathing the children is a wonderful time to celebrate that we are splashed with promise. Perhaps a raincoat could be put over the FaithChest® for splashed with promise devotions.

Sometimes my grandchildren love to take out all the resources in their FaithChest® so that grandpa will tell them a story about each thing in the FaithChest® as I put each item back into the FaithChest®. What a fun way of learning and creating even more faith stories.

One of the wonderful gifts that God has given the staff of the Youth & Family Institute in moving to their new location in Bloomington is an awareness of children of all ages and the need to always pass on faith. Our partnership with Martin Luther Manor blesses us by being surrounded with many elderly people whose next milestone perhaps is eternal life with God. It would be a wonderful idea for teenagers to give a FaithChest® to such an elderly person and then to help that person leave a legacy of faith for the family. The teenager could interview the elderly person and write their various faith stories for them. They could video some of the stories and burn them on a CD. They could help the elderly person select special items as symbols of God's grace and faithfulness to be passed on to the family. Such ministry not only leaves a beautiful legacy of faith for the family, it also establishes a wonderful relationship, a holy relationship between the teenager and the elderly person.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. If there are teenagers in your family, download the plans for making a FaithChest®, ask a skill woodworker in the family or friend to help you build a FaithChest® for a grandparent, great grandparent, a great uncle or aunt, or another wonderful elderly person. Then assist the elderly person to leave a legacy of faith.
2. Make copies of a line drawing of a FaithChest® for each member of the family. Each person either draws pictures or writes words describing what she or he would put in her or his FaithChest® and share with the family.
3. Contact each member of the extended family to find out whether or not they have a favorite Bible passage, and if so, what is that favorite Bible passage. Then create a family Bible passage tree with the name of the relative or friend and their favorite Bible passage. One could do a large drawing to be displayed on a wall and a smaller drawing to be put into the FaithChest®.
4. As a family faith project, ask each member of the family to write a paragraph or two describing key faith milestone memories. These should be put into a FaithChest®. If members of the family do not have a FaithChest®, use any of a variety of storage boxes to make one. This would be temporary until a permanent one can be crafted.