

# Celebrating Spiritual Birthdays



Connected but separate from Rites of Passage Experiences celebrated on your child's physical birthday is the opportunity to celebrate spiritual birthdays this coming year. As much as you celebrate and commemorated a physical birthday, consider also marking the day or the month of the members of your family's spiritual birthday.

When your child is younger, a little birthday cake or a card is nice. Young children will enjoy that and it starts a significant tradition for your family. As children grow older and mature, so should the celebrations. Consider these 6 simple, fun, but a little more mature ideas to celebrate the 6 years of spiritual birthdays, 6<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> grade years.

## 1. Card Shower

Birthdays used to be a time to get birthday cards. Now with social media, less and less people truly send paper birthday cards, outside of grandparents and immediately family. Consider giving your kid a shower...a card shower!

A few weeks before the spiritual birthday go out and purchase a larger amount of inexpensive birthday cards and blank cards. Get in contact with people who are part of your child's and family's spiritual community (friends, friend's parents, pastors, youth pastor, youth group members, teachers, coaches...) and provide them with a card. Explain to them what you are doing and what you are celebrating. Encourage each person or family to write a short personal note with spiritual encouragement/emphasis.

A week or so before collect the cards, placing all of them in a container that fits your child. For a boy consider a backpack or sports cinch sack and for a girl consider a basket or bag.

As an alternative, provide a pre-stamped and pre-addressed envelope for each card. A week or so out from the birthday have everyone start putting the cards in the mail, so there is a week or more of multiple cards coming in the mail each day. Once again in the email and social media world, most kids do not get actual "snail mail" anymore, adding more to make this something special.

## 2. Spiritual Scrapbook

Your family may have photo albums or scrapbooks full of pictures of vacations or other special memories. Why not also have a scrapbook of spiritual memories? For an upcoming spiritual birthday create a scrapbook of photos, quotes, and memories of spiritually significant moments in their life and the life of your family.

Start the scrapbook with a few pictures of your child around the time they accepted Christ. Throughout the scrapbook include pictures of things like: baptism, church musicals/programs, youth group events, mission trips, church events, and even groups of Christian friends. Also as part of your scrapbook you may also include other items like special Sunday school papers and crafts that you might have saved. Through out the entire scrapbook include personal spiritual thoughts and memories of your child at certain ages along with Bible verses that remind you of that time in their lives. Additionally, you can also have a few spiritually significant people to your child that are connected to that age write a short note, story, or memory to be included in the scrapbook

It will easily become something that can be a part of your child's bedroom, could be set out as part of their high school graduation, and a great spiritual reminder to be sent along with them as they head off to college.



## 3. Day of Service

On or near the day of a spiritual birthday plan a "family on mission" day. A day where your family goes, serves or lives out "mission". Instead of a day of celebrating a birthday with food or presents, make spiritual birthdays significant by living out faith in hands on ways.

Instead of surprising your child with a special day, include them in the planning. Find out what has been a part of their heart or a need in your community that means something to them. Take the day to dedicate it to serving that need in someway. Whatever money you would normally spend on a normal birthday, take a similar amount to be spent on blessing someone else on your child's spiritual birthday.

It can easily become a yearly family tradition, not just a one time thing. Consider each year on or around your child/children's spiritual birthday going out and serving others in some way.

## 4. Day of Encouragement

Regular birthdays, especially significant ones, have traditionally been ones where a big party is thrown and people stand up and say something nice. Why not give your child a whole day of that, in a way, on their spiritual birthday.

Pre-arrange before the "big day" a variety people in various ways throughout the entire day giving your child spiritual encouragement. Start the day off with your family having breakfast together and each member of your family sharing one thing they praise God for about

your child. Continue the day with special phone calls, text messages, email and personal notes from other Godly people in their life (grandparents, extent family, pastors, ....). If it is a school day, have Christian friends, teachers, and coaches give them a note sharing a kind word or Bible verse.

An additional idea similar to birthday posts on an actual birthday would be have people post words of spiritual encouragement, scriptures, or even prayers through their social media. It will not only be fun and uplifting for your child but also may be a powerful witness to unbelieving friends and family who may be part of their social media accounts.



### **5. Party with a Purpose**

If you do decide to go the party route, think about making it a party with a purpose. In a few different ways you can create a party that is more than just another celebration. Instead of presents, cards, or overspending on food create a party that has a real purpose.

Choose a mission or ministry that means something to your child or family and make that your theme. If you not sure what might be a good theme consider popular ministries like Compassion International or World Vision. Often these organizations have gift catalogs of needs that might easily tie-in to a fun party theme. Often these catalogs have purchase items like chickens, goats, or even a cow, which could easily lead to a funny chicken, goat, or cow themed party with costumes, decorations, food, and even games. Instead of traditional gifts have each person give money to purchase the selected item(s).

While this idea is for a spiritual birthday, you also might think of using it for your child's regular birthday as well. You might be surprised how fun it could be to start having parties with a purpose as a family all the time?

### **6. Night Out/Day Away**

This final idea may not be one that you want to do every year, but something you might do as a special celebration in later teen year. Like you might do for a normal birthday, spend a day or an evening away, but instead of just a fun time make this time away a spiritual one.

For a spiritual birthday look for a special Christian concert, drama, or an event to attend just with your child. Often these kinds of activities are attended with youth groups or church groups, but why not attend one with your child just the 2 or 3 of you. New spiritual memories and decisions are made at these events. What a special addition to a spiritual celebration, when a new fresh spiritual step can be made on the day of the original one!!