

Make a Faith Chest *by Matthew Kozlowski*

Why is this faith practice important?

As children and teens grow in the Christian faith, they will collect meaningful items along the way. For example, some churches give a candle at Baptism. In addition, there will be books, cards, crosses, religious gifts, items from camp... all of which may have deep spiritual impact.

Setting aside a dedicated place for these special items can make a big difference for a child, teen, or adult. A faith chest is a great way to keep the physical reminders of a faith journey together in one place. The items won't get lost or mixed up in a drawer with other household articles.



Finally, a faith chest allows us to look back, as often as we need, at the parts of our spiritual lives. In the case of young children, parents and children will love going through the chest together, sharing the story of each item and what it represents.

What materials are needed for this practice?

- A medium wooden chest. See next page for three links to boxes you can buy online.
- Stain, polyurethane, or paint.
- Brushes or other applicators.
- Cards, books, Scripture verses, and other items you have collected.

How to do it

Jump right in: You don't have to wait for a special occasion to present a faith chest. While a birthday, Baptism anniversary, or Baptism day is ideal, the most important thing is getting the faith chest tradition started. You can do this at any time.

Make a box: If you have carpentry skills or know someone who does, making a box is a wonderful gift. If not, buy an unfinished box and paint or stain it yourself. Painting or staining the box with a child is a fun and meaningful way to begin your faith chest tradition.

Select items: If it is part of your tradition, find the candle given at Baptism. Or include a picture or certificate from the Baptism. Write down special Bible verses on cards and place them in the chest. Ask important people such as Godparents, grandparents, or your pastor to write a note or give a gift for the chest. When child or teen opens a faith chest, he or she should know how much God loves them, and how this love comes through the love of trusted adults.

Resources for this practice



Links to wooden boxes

1. <https://woodcrafter.com/bx3130l-large-wood-trunk-box>
Great antique look. Metal pieces can scratch a table or floor.
2. <https://woodcrafter.com/sliding-lid-wine-box> (Double)
Sturdy and spacious. Wooden divider inside that must be removed.
3. <http://www.michaels.com/artminds-cornice-box/10255482.html?q=wood+box&start=5>
Beautiful and easy to finish. Somewhat fragile, especially the hinges.

Finishing Options (always sand box first with fine sandpaper)

1. Stain: Quick and easy. Apply with cloth rag.
2. Polyshades: Stain and polyurethane in one. Apply with foam brush, at least two coats.
3. Paint: Color and lasting protection. Apply with a good brush.

For a picture of the finished boxes see: <http://www.buildfaith.org/2015/08/30/make-a-faith-chest/>

About the author

Matthew Kozlowski works at the Center for the Ministry of Teaching at Virginia Theological Seminary. He shares life with his wife Danielle and two young daughters: Maria and Grace.

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