

CHRONOLOGY OF KEY DATES & MILESTONES

The Life of Dr. John Tolson

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1962	John Tolson enrolls in Northern Arizona State University after graduating from Manatee High School in Bradenton, FL and gets tapped to play basketball and baseball.
1964	Moves to William Carey College in Hattiesburg, MS to resume playing basketball and baseball.
1966	<p>Graduates from William Carey College where Tolson signs a contract to coach basketball.</p> <p>Decides to shift direction by trying his hand at coaching “off the field” – starts on a path to try to help athletes and others enhance their spiritual lives.</p> <p>Enrolls at Columbia Theological Seminary in Atlanta, GA.</p>
1968	Marries first wife Ruth Anne.
1969	<p>Graduates from the Columbia Theological Seminary.</p> <p>Takes a position as the High School Youth Director for the First Presbyterian Church in Shreveport, LA.</p>
1972	Moves to Jackson, MS where Tolson becomes a High School Youth Director for Covenant Presbyterian Church.
1972	Heads to Switzerland and studies with Dr. Frances Schaeffer, one of the top intellectuals of the past 50 years.
1973	Tolson’s first child Christin is born.
1974	Begins a new position as High School Youth Director for Highland Park Presbyterian Church in Dallas, TX.
1978	<p>Moves to Houston to start Gathering of Men and expands ministry working with pro-athletes.</p> <p>Starts The Gathering/USA, Inc., a national men’s outreach movement; also launches the NBA’s first chaplain program for the Houston Rockets.</p> <p>Has second child, daughter Adriene, who dies at five days old.</p>
1979	Becomes chaplain for the Houston Astros.
1980	Serves as chaplain for the Houston Oilers.

1980	Tolson adopts his son Luke.
1982	Receives a Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA.
1983	Moves to Orlando, FL to expand The Gathering.
1984	<p>Begins an eighteen-year run as chaplain for the University of Central Florida football team.</p> <p>Launches the first BASICS Bible Study at First Presbyterian Church of Orlando with 300-400 in weekly attendance.</p>
1985	Brings together two entrepreneurs and investors, Pat Williams and Jim Hewitt, and helps brainstorm the formation of Orlando's first NBA team, the Orlando Magic.
1987	Expands The Gathering into a full-time operation and appoints Larry Kreider as President and CEO.
1989	<p>Becomes chaplain for the Orlando Magic.</p> <p>Delivers motivational speech to Meeting Planners International conference.</p>
1992	The Gathering launches <i>First Step</i> , a basketball camp and mentoring program for inner-city youth.
1993	The Gathering publishes a motivational work titled <i>Moving Beyond Belief</i> .
1995	<p>Designs a program for the Gathering billed <i>50 Good Men</i> aimed at encouraging men to give back to their community.</p> <p>Loses Ruth Anne to a diabetes related illness.</p>
1996	Speaks to audience of 62,000 at Promise Keepers rally.
1998	Gains national spotlight with a feature article in <i>People Magazine</i> that highlights Tolson helping a professional golfer's family through a difficult time.
2000	<p>Expands the organization again with the creation of The Gathering for Women and appoints Lou Langston as its Director.</p> <p>Creates a video tool <i>Children in Rage/Fathers of Hope</i> to promote positive fathering skills.</p>
2000	<p>Launches a seminar series called <i>Dads and Moms that Make a Difference</i> to teach effective parenting techniques.</p> <p>Launches an accredited seminary level course which trains pastors and others on how to develop men's ministries in the church.</p>

2001	Marries former film and TV actress, Punky Leonard, now a dedicated Christian teacher and speaker.
2002	Delivers speech to Couples Dessert gathering in Orlando with wife Punky.
2003	Co-creates with Kreider a discipleship program called <i>The Four Priorities</i> for The Gathering.
2004	Moves ministry to Dallas from Orlando and launches The Tolson Group to expand all projects; locates ministry at Highland Park Presbyterian Church. The Gathering develops <i>Read & Succeed</i> , a program that tutors at-risk, inner-city kids.
2005	The Gathering completes construction of a school at Mission Emmanuel in the Dominican Republic that serves more than 500 children
2006	Adapts <i>The Four Priorities</i> into a workbook called <i>The Four Priorities: Life is Too Short to Get It Wrong</i> , which is distributed nationwide.
2008	Joins the Dallas Cowboys football team as Chaplain. Teaches weekly chapels, staff and player Bible studies, and disciples all players who are willing.
2008	Orders an additional 5,000 copies of <i>The Four Priorities</i> . Currently, more than 10,000 copies are in print.
2011	Ends chaplaincy with Dallas Cowboys in order to dedicate more time to building message of leadership and discipleship into men, churches, and para-church groups across the country.
2011	Published <i>Take a Knee</i> , a 31-day devotional for men of all ages. Each day provides a motivational message and scripture application pulled from locker room and chapel messages given during John's various chaplaincies.
2013	Published 3 rd edition of the <i>Four Priorities</i> – with a new look, slimmed-down packaging, and revamped chapters.

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