

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 | Graduates from William Carey College where Tolson signs a contract to coach basketball.
- 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.
- Enrolls at Columbia Theological Seminary in Atlanta, GA.
- 1968 | Marries first wife Ruth Anne.
- 1969 | Graduates from the Columbia Theological Seminary.
- Takes a position as the High School Youth Director for the First Presbyterian Church in Shreveport, LA.
- 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 | Moves to Houston to start Gathering of Men and expands ministry working with pro-athletes.
- Starts The Gathering/USA, Inc., a national men’s outreach movement; also launches the NBA’s first chaplain program for the Houston Rockets.
- Has second child, daughter Adriene, who dies at five days old.
- 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 Begins an eighteen-year run as chaplain for the University of Central Florida football team.
Launches the first BASICS Bible Study at First Presbyterian Church of Orlando with 300-400 in weekly attendance.
- 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 Becomes chaplain for the Orlando Magic.
Delivers motivational speech to Meeting Planners International conference.
- 1992 The Gathering launches First Step, a basketball camp and mentoring program for inner-city youth.
- 1993 The Gathering publishes a motivational work titled Moving Beyond Belief.
- 1995 Designs a program for the Gathering billed 50 Good Men aimed at encouraging men to give back to their community.
Loses Ruth Anne to a diabetes related illness.
- 1996 Speaks to audience of 62,000 at Promise Keepers rally.
- 1998 Gains national spotlight with a feature article in People Magazine that highlights Tolson helping a professional golfer's family through a difficult time.
- 2000 Expands the organization again with the creation of The Gathering for Women and appoints Lou Langston as its Director.
Creates a video tool Children in Rage/Fathers of Hope to promote positive fathering skills.

- 2000 | Launches a seminar series called Dads and Moms that Make a Difference to teach effective parenting techniques.
- 2001 | Launches an accredited seminary level course which trains pastors and others on how to develop men's ministries in the church.
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 The Four Priorities for The Gathering.
Leads a couples retreat in Branson, MO with wife Punky.
- 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 Read & Succeed, 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 The Four Priorities into a workbook called The Four Priorities: Life is Too Short to Get It Wrong, which is distributed nationwide.

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