

7 Gifts for church & home

Summary Gift Two:

The Power of
Memory Events

INFORMATION & DISCUSSION GUIDE

Why Memory Events Are So Important

Memory events have the power to shape our children both spiritually and psychologically.

While the lives of our children are heavily documented in photos and video on social media and stored in families' digital archives, studies suggest photos and videos have little impact. Parents play a bigger role in helping determine not just how many early memories children can recall, but how children interpret and learn from these events.

"Our personal memories define who we are. They bond us together," says Dr Robyn Fivush. Children whose parents encourage reminiscing and storytelling about daily events show better coping and problem-solving skills by their preteens, and fewer symptoms of depression (Robyn Fivish, 2011).

Memories are like "GPS" markers in our children's lives and give them important landmarks in their life upon which they can build their faith. The church and home play a crucial part in making sure that these memory markers are put in place.

Dr Wayne French (2005) discovered in his research that church memory events have lifelong impact, they enhance spirituality, they help develop a sense of belonging, create a sense of value, and bond our children and youth to the church.

Memory events played a significant role in biblical times as well. For example, when the people of Israel crossed the Jordan (Joshua 3), they were commanded to take 12 stones "to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever."

In order to grow our children spiritually, it is important that churches and homes create intentional memory events in the lives of our children. The biggest impediment to creating memory events is the busyness of life and the individualisation that media and technology creates.

What can CHURCHES do?

Be intentional about creating memory events for families in your congregation.

1. CREATE SPECIAL MEMORY EVENTS THAT FAMILIES CAN ATTEND

These type of intergenerational events are key. These could be special worship days, service activities, social events/trips, church camps and high days. These days leave indelible marks on the children long after all the planning, stress, expense and worry about these events have been forgotten. This is why the family ministries/social co-ordinator in your church is a key position.

2. CELEBRATE MILESTONES IN THE LIVES OF THE CHILDREN IN YOUR CHURCH

Events such as baby dedications, child commitment ceremonies, baptism, graduations etc are key opportunities to place families at the centre of the church and affirm them and their children in a special way. Milestones are an ideal way to celebrate with the family but also to instruct and equip them in their parenting role. Certificates and gifts given by the church family at these event are keepsakes that stay with the children long after the ink has yellowed and faded.

3. PROVIDE MENTORS FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

These are older people who can play a key role in the lives of your families and children. An older mentor is helpful as a model of faith, marriage and resilience in the midst of the various crises that life throws at

families. Children will remember the people of significance in their faith communities far more than what they learned. These mentors provide a living witness of faith in action to children. When children see how faith works for these mentors they are more likely to take their place in God's faith story as well.

4. PROVIDE ADVENTURER AND PATHFINDER CLUBS

Clubs such as these provide adventure and opportunities for service and growth that are key spiritual growth catalysts in the lives of our children. Camporees, camps, hikes and rally days also provide ideal high point markers for the children that impact them in spiritually significant ways. Attend Big Camp and other special events as provided by the Conference.

5. ATTEND BIG CAMP AND OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS AS PROVIDED BY THE CONFERENCE

Big camps, summer camps and other Conference-wide events shows our children a bigger picture of the family of God and challenge our children and families to make spiritual decisions that impact these children for life. These larger celebrations will be long remembered as special events in the spiritual landscape of each child's and family's life.

What can FAMILIES do?

Create special memories and traditions together as a family.

1. PLAN A SPECIAL HOLIDAY TOGETHER

Family holidays give the children quality time to see their parents in a more relaxed, informal setting away from the stress of work and life's hassles. Families that play together stay together and it also allows time for great mentoring and spiritual discussions.

2. DECLARE ONE NIGHT A WEEK "FAMILY NIGHT IN"

Weekly 'family nights' spent playing together in a variety of fun ways guarantees a multitude of benefits not just for family cohesion but for individual family members as well! Stronger bonds between family members are created, lifetime learning of values and skills occurs and children feel more secure. Playing together also increases the sense of wellbeing for children and adults. The pleasant memories created during these family nights will stick with your children long after they leave home.

3. CREATE SPECIAL TRADITIONS AROUND HOLIDAYS AND YEARLY EVENTS ON THE CALENDAR

Ritual and traditions are the glue that binds the family together physically and spiritually. Creating traditions and rituals around Christmas, Easter and other special days are great memory events as these events are often shared with extended family and close friends.

4. CELEBRATE MILESTONES AND RITES OF PASSAGE

Birthdays, school years completed, dedications, coming of age, getting your drivers licence are all events to be celebrated. Our children grow up fast and celebrating these events at home and at church help to make these milestones memorable and creates spiritual glue for the child and family.

5. DECLARE FAMILY MEALS A "NOT TO BE MISSED" EVENT

The benefits of a regular family meal is extraordinary. Children are more likely to do better at school and are less likely to get involved in at-risk activities. They are also more likely to adopt the faith and values of those who share their table. The taste and smell of special meals are also great memory-makers for children that stays with them for life. The magic is not in the food however but in the conversations and discussions that happen around the family table.

5 Questions for Boards and Churches to Discuss/Brainstorm

- 1. WHAT ARE THE CURRENT INTERGENERATIONAL MEMORY EVENTS CURRENTLY ON OUR CALENDAR FOR FAMILIES?**

- 2. WHAT OTHER KEY MEMORY EVENTS CAN WE PLACE ON OUR CALENDAR TO HELP OUR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES CREATE MEMORIES?**

- 3. WHAT ARE THE KEY MILESTONES IN OUR CHILDREN'S LIVES AND HOW CAN WE AS A CHURCH CELEBRATE THEM?**

- 4. HOW CAN WE HELP OUR FAMILIES PLAN AND FIND THE TIME FOR MEMORY EVENTS?**

- 5. HOW CAN WE MAXIMISE THE IMPACT OF PATHFINDERS AND ADVENTURES FOR OUR FAMILIES?**
