

MESSAGE MINDER

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Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison?

Haggai 2:3



Generation to Generation: Faith Transmission

By Jonathan Stone

At some point most children ask their parents the question, “Why do we go to church?” In the Old Testament Moses gave the children a paradigm for dealing with such questions. In Deuteronomy 6:20-21 it reads, “When your children come to you saying, ‘What is the meaning of the commandments, laws, and rules which the Lord God has commanded you?’ then tell them, ‘We were slaves in Egypt, and God delivered us with a mighty hand.’”

It is interesting that Moses instructs them to avoid the question. He could have instructed them to sit down and talk about the rules and laws that governed their day-to-day lives. However, we are given a different paradigm. The model that we see here is that when our children begin to question the routines that mark our faith it should stand as a sign to us that it is time for us to tell them our story, a time to tell about His mighty deeds that we have witnessed.

God uses our stories to build up faith in others, including the next generation that will follow us. As we reach back and remember those stories He prepares us to move forward into the new things He is preparing to do. These stories do not have to be limited to stories that we saw with our own eyes. In fact, many of the people that Moses was talking to that day were too young to remember being liberated from Egyptian slavery, if they had been born at all. Yet, it was still their story too, passed along to them through storytelling. A generation of Israelites grew up in the wilderness hearing a wild tale of walking through the Red Sea on dry land, with walls of water on either side. Then they left the wilderness, entered Canaan, and the first miracle God did was to part the waters of the Jordan River. They walked across it on dry land. How excited they must have been to be experiencing their own miraculous river crossing! Now they understood what their parents and grandparents had experienced a

generation earlier. Yet, this was also truly a new thing. They were venturing into new territory, and getting to see things that their forefathers had never seen.

I recently told my daughters the story of their great grandmother getting attacked in a grocery store while living on the mission field. In the midst of the attack the whole group screamed and ran out of the store. The cashier, frozen as if he had seen a ghost, asked my grandmother who that man was and where did he go. He estimated the man was over eight feet tall. My grandmother never saw the man, but knew that the Lord had sent her an angel that day to protect her. My girls’ eyes lit up as they thought about an eight-foot tall angel walking up behind their little great grandmother and scaring all the bad guys away. I was not there on the day that the Lord sent an angel to protect my grandmother. Nonetheless, that story lives in me, and now it lives in my children as well.

You shall teach these words diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when walk by the way and when lie down and when you rise up.

Deuteronomy 6:7

Family Activities

- 1) Start a family project of story gathering with your children. Create a list of questions to be answered by family members. Mail off the questions to family members. Read the answers and stories together as they are returned.
- 2) Create a set of interview questions with your children. Take a video camera and record your children interviewing family members about how God has moved in their life.
- 3) Tell your story to your children. Ask them to draw a picture from the story you shared. Have your children tell you a story in which God answered a prayer or helped them in some way. Now you draw a picture from their story and share it with them.
- 4) Launch a faith sharing week in your family. Take a few minutes at the dinner table each evening to take turns sharing. One possibility for structuring it is: each person share 3 things that were good about the day and share 1 thing that was not so good, but how God may use it to bring about good in your life.

Sharing with Strangers

Speaking with strangers about God can be intimidating for many of us. Yet, it does not have to be and really should not be this way. Prayerfully consider natural ways that you can share your faith with some of the strangers that you interact with each day. One possible approach is to focus on prayer. Most people do not mind being prayed for if they have a real need. Simply ask a cashier or service worker if they have anything they would like you to pray about. This works very well in restaurants. When your server brings you your food tell them you are about to pray for your food and ask them if they have anything they would like you to pray about. If their prayer request reminds you of a time when God answered a similar request share the story!

Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

And that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, that you may know that I am the Lord.

Exodus 10:2

