



Pass On Your Faith This Generation for God

We will not hide them from our children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power and the wonders He has done.

Psalm 78:4

Running Sheet For Programme

Please note, these are approximate times and assume an 11:00 am start.

- 10:50 Prelude music
- 11:00 Congregational singing
- 11:09 Welcome and Introduction
- 11:13 Item – children's singing group
- 11:16 Prayer
- 11:19 Sermonette 1 – Friendship & Community
Includes short drama
- 11:24 Sermonette 2 – Authentic Spiritual Role Models
- 11:29 Reader's Theatre
- 11:32 Sermonette 3 – Involvement in Ministry Service
- 11:37 Power Point Presentation to Music
Suggested song - *Remember Me* - Mark Schultz and Ginny Owens from the album Mark Schultz - Word Australia 2000
- 11:40 Sermonette 4 – Traditions and Spiritual Memories
Includes Monologue from young Colgate
- 11:45 Drama/Reader's Theatre
- 11:49 Sermonette 5 – Heart Habits of Bible Study and Prayer
- 11:54 Leader's summary and message
- 11:59 Closing song
- 12:03 Closing prayer
- 12:05 Postlude of children's music

Introduction

Have large pot plant in centre stage maybe with some dry leaves.

Child in gum boots and gardening overalls comes through and stops next to the plant. Looks at the plant and says:

Child One

This plant needs more soil. If it is going to grow it needs all its roots to be growing into nice, deep soil. *(Child walks off and comes back with a bag of soil. Have a large sack but most of it needs to be filled with paper and have a little bit of potting mix to pour out at the top. Child pours some soil around plant.)*

There that's better. *(Turns bag around and places it to the side. The bag has a big F on it. Child stands behind bag.)*

Child Two

(Comes in and looks at the plant.)

What this plant needs to grow healthy and well is more fertilizer. Plants need nutrition to help them grow strong.

(In a similar way to Child One, Child Two comes back with bag of fertilizer. Pours it on and then turns bag around. It has a large A on it. Child Two stands behind the bag.)

Child Three

This plant is looking a bit dry – it needs water. *(Comes back with watering can – waters the plant and then puts watering can to the side - it has a big I on it. Child stands behind watering can.)*

Child Four

What this plant needs is a bit of a prune. Get rid of a few bad branches and make lots of room to encourage the good ones.

(Comes back with a bag and prunes some branches off and puts them in the bag, turns the sac around to show the letter T. Child stands behind bag.)

Child Five

This plant needs some sunlight. Let me turn it around so that the other side gets some light. *(The letter H is on the pot.)*

Child One

We would like to welcome you to worship this morning. We're really glad you're here today as together we make up the church family.

Child Two

If this is your first time at _____ we are glad you came. Today we are talking about some

important stuff that we think everyone needs to know.

Child Three

We are talking about the ingredients that make an environment where faith can grow. Just like a plant needs soil, fertilizer, water, pruning and sunlight us kids need various things that help us grow in faith.

Child Four

Jesus said that it is important to think about how we grow someone's faith. Whether we are real physical babies or spiritual children we require a place that helps us grow in our faith.

Child Five

So what are these ingredients that help you pass on your faith. *Each child stands beside a letter.*

F is for Friendship and Community

Children need to know they belong and have people who care about them and support them. By the way, adults need the same.

A is for Authentic Spiritual Role Models

Us kids need to see adults who trust God. Who will encourage us and take the time to teach us how to make good decisions.

I is for Involvement in Ministry and Service

For faith to develop we need to be involved in the church. There are lots of things that God can use us to do.

T is for Traditions and Spiritual Memories

We need traditions in our families and church that help us remember and realise that we are part of something big.

H is for Heart Habits of Bible Study and Prayer

We need to find out how to study the Bible and how to have our own devotional times.

Child One

So this morning think about what you are passing on to us. How are you investing into our lives. What sort of people are you shaping us to become?

Item

Have children present an item that points to spiritual growth.

Prayer

If possible have a grandparent, parent and child. Have them pray for each other and especially have the grandparent and parent praying for wisdom in passing on their faith.

Sermonette 1

Friendship and Community

Did you know that a child's worldview is already shaped by the time they are seven? That means by the time we finish primary Sabbath School we have already formed the framework for what we believe and how we think about the world. When it comes to shaping our faith there is no such thing as just babysitting. From Beginners right through our growing years, what we think about God is being moulded. What happens in our homes, school, Sabbath School, around this church is very important in helping to shape our relationship with God.

Did you know that by the time we have finished Juniors, many of us have already decided whether we will stay in this church or not. We often leave when we are older. However this is when we are thinking about these things.

How you pass on your faith to the next generation is vital. This church is only ever one generation from extinction. Whether you are a parent with extra special responsibility, a Sabbath School leader or someone who takes the time to care about us, each adult in this church has a very important part to play in passing on this faith to us.

While there are lots of different influences that shape our faith, today we are looking at five. Let me start with the Letter F (*The speaker steps over to the bag with F marked on it. The speaker, child one, is interrupted by child two. Someone she knows who happens to be just walking past.*)

- Child Two:** (*Looking a bit scruffy with perhaps a Spiderman type shirt, backward cap, low hanging jeans and a skate board.*) What are you doing here all dressed up (*insert name*)?
- Child One:** I'm talking to these people about the things that influence us in making our life decisions.
- Child Two:** Whooa that sounds a bit heavy – don't blow your brain on this stuff – we're just kids, don't get to serious. Out of sight out of mind my dad thinks. My mum reckons we should be seen but not heard. In fact I think most of the time it's not even seen.
- Child One:** Well it's not that complicated. The letters F A I T H, that spells faith, remind people how they can influence us in the right way.
- Child Two:** That's nice, my life is more like T O A D – that spells toad, and it stands for Television, while my parents are Out All Day. (*Emphasis on words with the letters TOAD.*)
- Child One:** That's a bit unfortunate – don't you get bored.
- Child Two:** Well we've got lots of DVD's and some really cool Playstation games.
- Child One:** And you do that all day? Don't you run out of things to watch?
- Child Two:** My brother just goes to the video store and gets some more DVD's and games. Some of them say you have to be over sixteen on the cover, I can still make them work though – they're just like all the other ones – you just put

them in the machine and off they go. I don't see why they think you have to be older to make them work – maybe some kids are a bit dumb.

- Child One:** I think that means they're not good for you, not that you can't get them working.
- Child Two:** No way, they're all the good ones. Anyway I bet I can guess what your letters stand for. I bet I can get at least three out of five.
- Child One:** Alright then.
- Child Two:** These are things that influence our lives, right?
- Child One:** Yes ...
- Child Two:** I don't need clues, I can work this out. F – stands for Fast Food, French Fries, Fanta, Fillet of Fish but they are not major influences really ummm.
- Child One:** I'll give you the first one, its Friends.
- Child Two:** Of course, my mum watched it all the time, She brought the whole series on video. I didn't really think it would be a factor influencing kids though but everyone watched it I guess. Didn't Rachel end up with Ross? And Joey, man, he had so many girlfriends it was hard to keep up. It had PG on it but Mum said that meant Pretty Good.
- Child One:** I wasn't talking about the show, I was talking about having real friendships and belonging.
- Child Two:** (*not really listening*) I'm sure I can get A. It could be uummmm ARL or AFL that's a pretty big influence in my house on Friday night, Saturday afternoon and Sunday. My dad gets nothing done once the footy is on. Lucky we have extra TV's so we can all watch our own shows, you can only take so much footy. My dad gets right into it. He wants to kill the ref and when our team loses I'm glad I'm not our dog. We all keep out of Dad's way on a bad footy day.
- Child One:** No it's not AFL.
- Child Two:** Let me think. It can't be A for ABC kids – we're all over Thomas, Bob The Builder and The Koala Brothers. I've got it. It's Action Heroes. Yes they are a big influence. Superman, Spiderman, Batman – all here to save the world.
- Child One:** Well you're getting closer maybe – its about authentic spiritual role modes.
- Child Two:** See I'm good at this let me try I. The Incredibles? – no, wait, that has to be the internet. Me and my brothers spend ages on the internet. They've got everything on there, even how to make homemade bombs. My brother looks at other sites with lots of girls. He says it's for a special school project he is working on. He's been working on that project a long time.
- Child One:** Your mum lets him?

Child Two: She says as long as we're quite and not fighting. *(Goes on without waiting for an answer)* Of course T stands for Television. We've got one for every person in our house. That way it stops fights and keeps the family happy. Mum thinks it's very important that we have a happy family.

Child One: Well not exactly what I had in mind.

Child Two: And H stands for. Let me see H is for Having everything? Having a good time? *(questioningly)* Homework? I've got it Home and Away! Every good family watches Home and Away. How else are we supposed to know values, how to get girlfriends and what affairs are all about.

Child One: Well I was thinking more about Heart Habits.

Child Two: Don't tell me about Hearts – my dad had a heart attack last year, Mum said too much drink and as for habits, my mum is always talking to my aunty about her habit. Anyway must go – the boys will be waiting for me.

Child One: Do you perhaps want to... well... maybe spend some ummm my church is having a Kids Holiday Programme and I think you would like it.

Child Two: Is there food?

Child One: Yes there is.

Child Two: Count me in – in fact I'll bring my buddies – count five of us in.

Child Two exits stage and Speaker continues with rest of talk.

What factors shape the lives of the children in our church family? Romans 12 says that we live in a culture that wants to drag us to its level of immaturity and this starts really early.

To go against the culture we need to be part of a church family where we really belong, where we are loved and supported. Where we can explore our relationship with God and talk about it with people who care about us. Every human needs relationships - that's how God created us. Babies die if they are not given significant human contact. The relationships we get early in life are really important to how we see God and the world.

For us children to really know 'God is love' we must experience human love. To really understand God's forgiveness we must experience forgiveness from humans. The responsibility for making this church a place where kids belong and where faith is modelled belongs to all of us. We all need to show that we really care about each other and that we put other people before ourselves. Thank you adults for taking the time to care about us and letting us know that this church family is a place where we can belong.

Sermonette 2

Authentic Spiritual Role Models

Our second ingredient is Authentic Spiritual Role Models. Us kids see a lot of things and our brains do a lot of thinking. Even though you may not know it, we are watching you to see if what you say is really what you think and how important God really is to you.

For us to grow in faith we need it modelled by adults around us – that's you by the way. We need to see you trust God and serve Him.

The way you treat each other tells us lots about how seriously you take God's commands. The way you treat us shows us how important you think we are. We need to see people who have the fruit of the spirit, who are loving, patient, forgiving, humble and willing to serve.

When you complain about the church or gossip about other people we see that and it can chip away at our spiritual growth. However when we see you encouraging each other, praying for one another and serving one another we see how faith can work and our faith grows. What you are passionate about we learn is important. What are you passionate about?

People who take the time to listen to our questions about God and find out how we are going are especially important. Sure you might say that's the job of our parents and you're right. However the church is there to help in this journey and each one of us has a responsibility for each other, especially adults for children.

This book *(Gifted Hands – it will be in most Adventist church libraries*)* is an incredible story of how Ben Carson grew up in a wild part of town in a single parent home. He was called the dumbest kid in the fifth grade. However in telling his story he wrote about how his mum really believed in him, loved him and prayed for him. He also wrote about people in his church who looked out for him and included him. Today Ben Carson is the head of neurology at Johns Hopkins Hospital. I wonder where he would be right now if no one had cared?

You might never know the impact of taking the time to care about us might have. It doesn't mean we will all become brain surgeons. However, the most significant people we can be are kids who love God and love has a big part to play in that process.

Seeing an adult model faith is more powerful than listening to a hundred Bible stories. Our eternal destiny is too important to leave to chance. If you don't show us what is important the world certainly will. What are you showing us?

* *Gifted Hands – The Ben Carson Story*, Benjamin S Carson, Zondervan 1990.

Readers Theatre/Scripture Reading

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 *(where verse is found on data projector followed by relevant pictures)*

- Child 1:** And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.
- Child 2:** You shall
- Child 3:** teach them diligently to your children,
- Child 2:** and shall
- Child 4:** talk of them when you sit in your house,
- Child 3:** when you walk by the way,
- Child 2:** when you lie down,
- Child 1:** and
- Child 4:** when you rise up.
- Child 2:** You shall
- Child 1:** bind them as a sign on your hand, and
- Child 2:** they shall
- Child 3:** be as frontlets between your eyes,
- Child 2:** you shall
- Child 4:** write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Psalm 71:18 *(where verse is found on data projector followed by relevant pictures)*

- Child 1:** Don't let me die till I tell the next generation of your wonderful works,
- Child 4:** Your power to all who are to come

Psalm 78:1-7 *(where verse is found on data projector followed by relevant pictures)*

- Child 2:** O my people, hear my teaching;
- Child 3:** listen to these words
- Child 1:** they were told to our forefathers
- Child 4:** And we must pass them on
- Child 3:** We will not
- Child 1:** hide them from our children
- Child 3:** we will

- Child 1:** tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord,
- Child 3:** We will tell of:
- Child 4:** His power
- Child 1:** and of the wonders he has done...
- Child 2:** We must tell each generation
- Child 3:** so all will know him.
- Child 4:** And love him.

Sermonette 3

Involvement in Ministry and Service

Today this church is helping our faith grow lots. You see, when we are involved in serving God we grow in our faith. That's the third ingredient. We need to be able to serve and participate in the activities of our church.

Serving God is important for all of us to do. One of the reasons God put you on this planet is to serve. How you serve shows us what God is like. Letting us help you serve helps us experience God.

The Bible says in Proverbs 20:11 that *"even a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right."* Some people think that children should be seen but not heard. Some people think that our turn will come one day when we grow up. That's not what God thinks. He wants everyone in his church serving and being available for Him to use. Even –us kids.

The Bible is full of examples of kids who served:

- Samuel served in the temple (1 Samuel 2:18)
- The little servant girl in the story of Naaman wasn't afraid to tell Naaman's wife about God's power (2 Kings 5:2-4)
- Daniel was young – probably in his early teens when he decided to stand for God (Daniel 1:8)
- Josiah the king of Judah served God when he was eight (2 Kings 22:1-2)

Serving makes us feel part of the church and gives us a sense of belonging. Very few of us will be lost to the church as teenagers if we are involved in serving now. When we serve it also has a great influence on other children. We realise that this church is for us and not just a place our parents bring us to.

Sure we need help and we need good role models but we can do lots to serve God and allow Him to use us. Most Christian kids would just love to serve God – we just need to be given a go.

Some ideas for serving might be

- helping deliver food parcels
- helping with letterboxing and video ministry follow up
- we can be welcomers
- helping the deacons
- handing out bulletins
- singing. There are lots of ways if we keep thinking.

Think about how you serve God and what it would take to mentor one of us kids in that area of serving.

In the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand, the disciple Andrew did not see much when a little boy showed him he had five loaves and two fish. However for Jesus what the little boy had was enough to be used by Him to accomplish His purpose.

God has plans for our generation and He trusts you to train us.

Will you help us serve?

Powerpoint Presentation with song Remember Me (or other appropriate song that reflects on passing faith to a new generation).

Play song with powerpoint pictures of children in your church being involved interspersed with quotes about the value of children.

Remember Me, Mark Schultz and Ginny Owens from the album Mark Schultz - Word Australia 2000.

Sermonette 4

Traditions and Spiritual Memories

(Child comes in dressed in a costume from the early 1800's.) Our farm here in Hartford America is a bit different to the one we had in England but it's still lots of hard work. However my dad says that many hands make light work. So my mum, brother and sisters, we all work together. We don't have much money but we sure have a lot of fun. After the work is done we play for a long time. My favourite is hide and seek. I hide in the stable and it takes ages for dad to find me. At nights my dad tells us Bible stories and tells us what it was like coming from England to here and how God took good care of our family. He would then pray for us and we would all take turns praying too. My mum is always telling us about how good God is and each night sits by our beds reads us stories from the Bible and then prays for and with us. Mum and Dad are always telling us that it is important to put God first.

(Older Child) Robert and Mary Colgate shifted to America in 1798. Their oldest son William moved away from home at sixteen because the family farm was not able to support him financially. However with him went the lessons from his childhood. The last words from his mother rang clearly in his ears "Be a good man, give your heart to Christ and Give God your best." This same message was given to him by a friend who was a canal boat captain.

"Be sure you start right, and you'll get along well. Someone will be the leading soap maker in New York. It may be you! Be a good man, give your heart to Christ, give God all that belongs to Him. Make an honest soap and give God a fair pound" were the words of the captain.

William went on to run a starch, soap and candle business. Part of William's business became making and selling toothpaste. William was well known in the business world for tithing a tenth of all his income. He supported a lot of foreign mission projects. More importantly William was known as a man who knew God. He was recognised as one of the leading Christian men in New York. People in the community said he was always ready to help. The values he learnt growing up shaped his home and on the Colgate website it says this: "He aimed to make his home pleasant and the family circle the chief attraction for its members".

When you next brush your teeth or see the Colgate brand think of the man who started this company. He was an example of how traditions and spiritual memories can shape a life and be passed on – by parents and other adult influences. Think about what traditions and spiritual memories you are shaping for the children you influence.

Traditions and spiritual memories are very important in growing our faith. A tradition might be what we do at family worship time, at meal times, at bedtime or on family nights. Some spiritual memories might be how we make Sabbath special or celebrate Christmas. Families and church families need to think about traditions and spiritual memories as this is a very important way to pass on our faith from one generation to the next.

After the service there are some pages available in the foyer *(or however your church chooses to distribute)* that will give you ideas for creating spiritual traditions. *(*see book details below)*

Sadly we live in a very fast paced society where parents are racing home from work, where there are so many things for us kids to be involved in. We might be very busy doing lots of things, however, in all of this the most important things may be lost. Parents and other adults may say they are too busy or make lots of other excuses. However God trusted you with the

responsibility of passing the riches of His grace on to us. When you do not do that you are robbing us.

What memories will we have of our church? When we think back, what memories will stand out? Those memories are being created right now.

**There are some fantastic ideas in the "Parent Potentials Guidesheets" that are included in 'Keeping The Faith' by V. Bailey and Judith Gillespie with Timothy Gillespie and Cheryl Webster. These sheets are allowed to be copied for groups studying this resource. Maybe this service is a good time to start up some Spiritual Parenting small group classes that can work through this guidebook. The Guidebook is available from the Adventist Book Centre.*

Drama / Readers Theatre

Adapted play from page 56 in *Rock Solid Kids* by Larry Fowler.

Actors

Mum, Dad, Nathan, Joshua and Jennifer

Setting

Two adults and three children on stage. Each dressed as one of the characters. The spot light will come up on them and they will act out what is read when their character is mentioned. Two children to one side who will read out the following. One child to read out the time, the other to read out the activity that takes place at that time.

5:30am	Alarm rings. Dad gets up
5:45am	Dad wakes up Mum. Mum gets up
6:00am	Dad gulps down breakfast and leaves for work
6:45am	Mum wakes Nathan (<i>1st grade</i>) and Jennifer (<i>3rd grade</i>) then gets them dressed
7:10am	Baby wakes. Mum feeds the kids and prays with Nathan and Jennifer between bites
7:30am	Mum walks Nathan and Jennifer to the bus stop. Dad has his first meeting at work and deals with an upset boss (on phone) then gets a call to teach next Sabbath's lessons class
7:45am	Mum plans Joshua's first birthday party
8:30am	Mum takes Joshua to babysitter, then goes to part-time job
1:00pm	Dad has ten minutes for lunch
1:45pm	Mum finishes work, eats lunch in the car and gets car serviced before picking up Joshua
3:10pm	Nathan and Jennifer come home and eat a quick snack
3:45pm	Mum gathers up the kids and takes Jennifer to soccer practice and Nathan to piano lessons
4:30pm	Mum picks up the kids and takes them to Burger King for tea
5:15pm	Dad gets home makes sandwich and mows lawn
5:30pm	Mum and the kids get home. Jennifer showers, Nathan whines, Joshua smells and Dad mows on
6:30pm	Mum has worship practice at church. Dad and kids watch TV

7:45pm	Dad sends kids to bed and finds out that Jennifer has homework
8:45pm	Mum gets home. Nathan is in bed. Jennifer is finishing homework. Baby is asleep on the floor. Dad is asleep on the sofa.
9:30pm	Mum puts baby to bed. Finishes shopping list, wakes up Dad and goes to bed
10:30pm	Dad catches up on the sports scores, then goes to bed.
Dad:	How was your day, Honey?
Mum:	(<i>without opening eyes</i>) Busy.
Time reader:	It was the first time they had talked to each other all day.

Sermonette 5

Heart Habits of Bible Study and Prayer

The last of our five ingredients is Heart Habits of Bible Study and Prayer. During our childhood lifelong habits are being formed. What heart building habits are we being shaped in?

We need help from adults in shaping our devotional lives. We learn lessons from the Bible ourselves, pray and do things like journaling, listening to music or spending time in nature that makes us grow in our relationship with God. Sometimes we think a devotional time is just for adults however it's very important that you help us experience our own devotional life now.

It starts with parents and other adults reading, talking with and praying for us. However, as we get older we can be involved more and more until we have shaped our own devotional life.

The apostle Paul said to Timothy, 2 Timothy 3:15, *"From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."* Someone must have taken the time to help Timothy know the scripture and how to make it real in his life. For New Testament Jews parents took very seriously the need for their children to memorise Scripture. This was also helped in the temple where children were taught to love scripture. By the time a child was twelve they had memorised Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The leaders thought it was very important that children knew the story of how God had worked in the lives of His children. Sadly along the way some of the focus was lost and people knew lots of scripture but did not think through what it meant for their lives. Jesus had a lot to say about this and how it is important not just to know the Bible but let it change our hearts.

It's still very important today that we know how God has worked in our history and how He wants to work in and through us right now. This is a responsibility for parents, Sabbath School leaders and everyone who has influence on us – that is all of you by the way. How are you helping us grow in our devotional life? What models are you providing? What questions do you ask us when you are chatting to us? If this church does not take this responsibility seriously who will?

Children's leader's challenge and thank you to children

This day might be a good time for the Children's Ministry Leader to challenge the church in terms of their responsibility to pass on their faith. This talk does not need to be long however a short call to this challenge could be very powerful in growing the whole church spiritually.

Closing song

Closing prayer – by leader or children

Postlude – children playing their instruments

Background Reading For Leaders

Pass On Your Faith

(Reprinted from GraceLink Newsletter – Quarter 2, 2006).

Children are waiting for us to connect them to Jesus and help them form a loving serving relationship with Him. God has entrusted us with this awesome task. He planned that this would happen in an intergenerational way - that one generation would pass their faith on to the next generation. As generations work together it has been found that children need:

Friendship and Community

Faith does not develop in a vacuum. Understanding faith, exploring faith and questioning faith are things to be done with others – people older than us, the same age as us and younger than us. We need to make sure that "church becomes a significant community of faith" John Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith? Children must feel that they belong and are surrounded by people who genuinely care for them and offer them friendship and support.*

To really know 'God is love', children must experience human love. Human forgiveness is a prerequisite to really understanding divine forgiveness. Glen Cupit, *Less Observed Sources of Spirituality in Children.*

Authentic Spiritual Role Models

Children need to see faith modelled by the adults around them. They need to see people who trust God, who give their lives in service to Him, who have highs and lows in their faith journey and who model grace." Modelling is powerful teaching for children – more powerful for faith development than listening to a hundred Bible stories or watching a month's worth of videos." Ivy Beckwith, *Postmodern Children's Ministry.*

Children need mentors who will walk their faith journey with them – people who will encourage them, teach them to apply Biblical principles and stories to their own lives and show them to make good spiritual decisions.

Involvement in Ministry and Service Activities

For faith to develop children need to serve and be allowed to participate in the activities and rituals of the church. They need opportunities to put faith into action through ministering in worship or Sabbath School and in serving others. David McClintock found that the "families who had specifically had a service focus at home had kept all their children in the church and were all active Christians in their community."

Our teaching needs to include activities where children are involved and can experience the stories of the Bible, through the use of all their senses – imaginative play and physical activity. Teaching needs to involve them by asking questions of how the Bible story makes them feel, what the story means to them and how they will change and grow because of it.

Traditions and Spiritual Memories

Having traditions in the home and church helps children feel that they belong to something bigger than themselves and gives them a sense of belonging. A strong faith, stability and identity are established through the routine and regular spiritual events that you have with

children. Traditions and spiritual memories may be times of family worship, meal times, family nights, bedtime prayers and traditions around Sabbath, worship, birthdays, Easter, or Christmas.

Heart Habits of Bible Study and Prayer

Ellen G. White writes that “children are the most susceptible to the teachings of the gospel; their hearts are open to divine influences and strong to retain the lessons learnt” Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*. Childhood is the time when lifelong habits are being formed. They need more than having the Bible read to them and prayers prayed for them. They need guidelines on how to study the Bible and how to pray and then support to help them have their own regular time of devotion. Pass on how you have managed to build a personal relationship with God and encourage children to make their own commitment to a lifelong, growing relationship.

Why Jerry and Not Jane?

(Summarised from his research by David McClintock – Director of Education TPUM).

If you could enhance the passing on of your faith to your children, would you?

A qualitative Adventist study conducted in Australia explored the experience of faith transmission across generations. It noted conditions that appeared to lead to successful faith transmission and conditions that may lead to the rejection of personal and corporate faith. There appeared to be ten areas where the respondents’ faith transmission could be enhanced.

1. **Strong family faith traditions and good relationships** within the family provoked positive memories and were great vehicles of ensuring maximum faith transmission. One person, who was no longer a Christian, reflected on the very positive memories he still retained from the Friday night “sing around the piano” and the special family time that Sabbath and family worships meant. The importance of developing positive family relationships with listening and understanding rather than an autocratic parenting model were also helpful.
2. **Warm, supportive families, schools and churches** were also helpful to nurture our children. As one respondent said, “The time I was struggling with my faith, when I most needed to talk issues through, my family and pastor appeared to withdraw.” From a parent’s perspective of the tension with that process, a parent stated their child’s withdrawal from corporate Adventist affiliation being “like a death in the family”. In reflection on church schools it was the relationships with teachers that were remembered, rather than the academic content of classes. Again with churches, it was the caring, supportive pastor and church family that won out – not the worship style or sermon content.
3. Families, schools and churches need to **avoid the exclusivism** that is often associated with Adventism. Acknowledge there are genuine Christians, who are not Adventists, otherwise we run the risk of our youth throwing the baby out with the bathwater and ditching everything. In fact one person who was working with a Baptist tradesman who was a sincere Christian, stated, “if Dad was wrong about only Adventists being Christians, then I figured he was wrong about Adventism and so I threw that out as well.”
4. We need to **avoid confusing Church, faith and God as synonymous**. Many of the

divergent children had confused salvation by church with salvation in Christ. This blurring then led to their dramatic shift in their faith paradigm. For most of the younger generation in the study, “faith” referred to their personal relationship with God, and corporate faith was simply how it was expressed. However for the parents in the study – a generation on – “faith” was used interchangeably for both personal and corporate faith.

5. **Meaningful devotional life** should be modelled at home, encouraged by teachers, and become an aspect of our church life. It would be valuable for our pastors to take seminars and present ideas on different personal devotional strategies that people could use. The most powerful reflections of some respondents was coming out from their bedrooms in the morning and seeing their parents – either mother or father – doing their own Bible reading in the kitchen or lounge room.
6. A very significant factor in adolescent faith development and the retention of our children/youth is **significant faith mentors** in the church who genuinely take an interest in them. This could include the hospitable hosts who invite the lonely university student’s home for Sabbath lunch, to the people who quietly take some adolescents under their wing and live their Christianity. The people who take the church youth out on a Sunday for a water-ski, encourage the musically inclined to become involved in the worship band or take an interest in their Sabbath/Sunday School and social activities perform a very valuable role for the faith transmission of our children and youth.
7. **Service opportunities** are an important aspect of enhancing faith. Memory events such as STORMCO, Soup Kitchens, Fly-n-builds and other ideas, fulfil a really important faith building role. In fact the families who had specifically had a service focus at home had kept all their children in the church and were all active Christians in their community.
8. **Open, supportive communication** within the family, the school and the church were important as well as nurturing effective decision making skills appropriate to their personal development. Parents and teachers who took the time to listen and dialogue had far better chance of passing on their faith than the dogmatic, autocratic person. It appeared that unless parents took the “risk” in a safe family environment to allow their children appropriate choice, then the children would exercise their new found freedom without restraint once removed from the home environment.
9. **Social and intellectual nurture** were very important. Some people are more intellectually wired and need to be given the freedom to question and have legitimate discussion on their concerns and issues. If ignored or simply told, “That is the answer, accept it!” then they ultimately moved away from corporate faith and sometimes personal faith. Others are more stimulated by social interaction and they need home, church and the school to be supportive and nurturing. If these social needs were not met and they were uninvolved, rejected or left out, then they too would move away from corporate faith and possibly personal faith. This means though, that parents, school and church need to be aware of the individual needs and try and match those needs as best we can.
10. Finally it would appear that we need to be much more **sensitive to personality style and personal development** to respond appropriately. Thus it would be valuable for the church to run work-shops for parents on personality styles and the different ways to react to the different styles. Often as parents we confuse treating our children exactly the same with the ideal of being consistent. Consistency will be attained when we, like Christ, love individually and unconditionally but treat each person as an individual rather than as part of an assembly line.

Thus our families, schools and churches need to demonstrate God's love, acceptance and willingness to listen. We need to be inclusive and value individuality rather than feel threatened by it. We need to use Gardner's multiple intelligences research so that we tap into the various ways that people naturally learn. We must be honest and encourage people to communicate openly. There is scope for recognising effective faith mentors and service opportunities and maximise these. Ultimately, faith could be likened to a toothbrush, everyone needs one, but it works best if you have your own. Our goal is to permeate our children and youth with the God-factor, as the Shema notes (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) it becomes a completely natural way of life.