

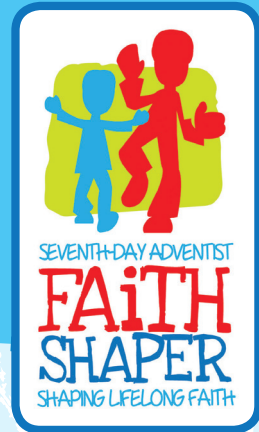
The faith shaper guide to

SERVICE, MISSION & PARTICIPATION

Shaping Lifelong Faith Through: **Service, Mission & Participation**
children.adventist.org.au/faith-shaper



7 Essential Faith Experiences



For Home,
Church and School

- S** Service and Mission
- H** Homes Empowered
- A** Authentic Relationships
- P** Participation
- I** Intergenerational Connections
- N** Noteworthy Memory Events
- G** God Encounters

children.adventist.org.au/faith-shaper

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord
and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18, NIV)



SERVICE, MISSION & PARTICIPATION

INTRODUCTION

The Bible encourages us to live like Jesus – to live showing love, compassion, generosity, hospitality and tolerance. “Be devoted to one another in love.” Romans 12:10.

Teaching children the skills and habits of being others-oriented and looking beyond themselves can be quite a challenge. It is counter cultural in a world obsessed with self and where what matters most is money, power and self-exaltation.

It will require a lot of time and it works best when children can see it being modelled by adults who love them. Service and participation is not an event or a short term mission project. It is what is happening naturally in everyday lives - a lifestyle. Serving and responding compassionately is successful when children are able to experience it with their families.

May the following notes and articles both encourage and support you.

Blessings

The Discipleship Ministry Team

South Pacific Division Seventh-day Adventist Church

“If we lose a generation of young people in the church, it won’t be because we didn’t entertain them, but because we didn’t dare do something meaningful with the gospel, in the light of the world that we live in.”

Shane Claiborne in Csinos and Beckwith, *Children’s Ministry in the Way of Jesus*.



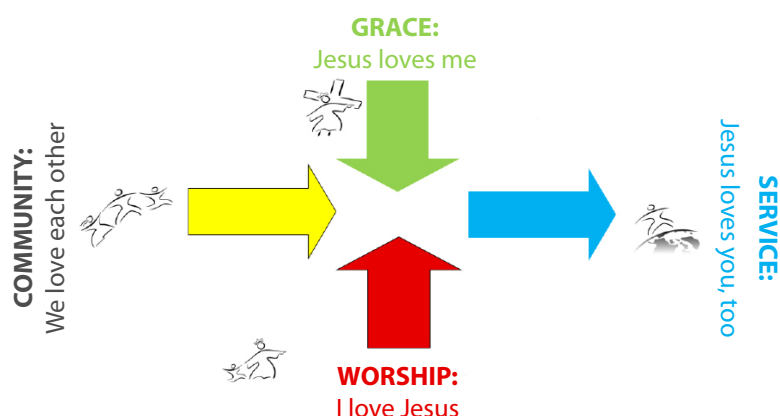
SERVICE & MISSION

Julie Weslake

Biblical Values:

Jesus said "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind (a) ... Love your neighbour as yourself." (Matthew 22:37, 39 (a) Deuteronomy 6:5.) "Be devoted to one another in love." (Romans 12:10) "Deny Yourself." (Matthew 16:24)

"Submit yourself to one another." (Ephesians 5:21) "Live at peace with one another." (Romans 12:18) "Do not think more highly of yourself than you ought." (Romans 12:13)



"Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the cause of the widow." (Isaiah 1:17)

Why Service Matters:

1. An unhealthy focus on your child will make life more difficult for the child.
2. Habitually giving your child whatever they want is more likely to lead to selfishness rather than service.
3. An upbringing filled with indulgences but not boundaries, creates insecurity instead of contentment.
4. A child centred home weakens your marriage.

A child will rarely, on his/her own, stop thinking of themselves and begin to focus on others. To be serving and compassionate will require:

1. Intentional teaching
2. Frequent modelling
3. And a lot more time

Others Matter More than Me:

“What we are, teaches our children far more than what we say, so we must be what we want our children to become.” (Joseph Chilton Pearce)

“Your children will never move toward honouring others until they genuinely believe that YOU value people over things.” (Dave Stone, *How to Raise Selfless Kids in a Self-centred World*)

Plant seeds of service by modeling caring behaviour in everyday life:

- Use please and thank you with your child
- Listen attentively, Don't interrupt
- Never laugh at your child
- Don't use name calling or put downs
- Don't yell or scream
- Share and take turns
- Be generous
- Look for the good in everyone
- Say sorry and will you forgive me

SHINE – Serve Him IN Everything

“Let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourself.” (Philippians 2:3)

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” (Matthew 7:12)

How?

In the morning, encourage your children to look for someone who they could help that day. To help someone feel like a winner. This is a critical step in transforming a person from a

consumer to a contributor – someone who has compassion for others and does something about it.

Time & Talent:

Show and teach children that time spent helping someone is time well spent. “The measure of true greatness is not the number of people you have; it’s the number of people you serve.”
(Dave Stone, p. 41)

Motive Matters:

- If you serve when no one is watching
- If there is no benefit to you
- If the one you are serving isn’t appreciative
- If you sacrifice what you’d like to be and what you’d like to be doing in order to keep a commitment to serve”

Thankfulness:

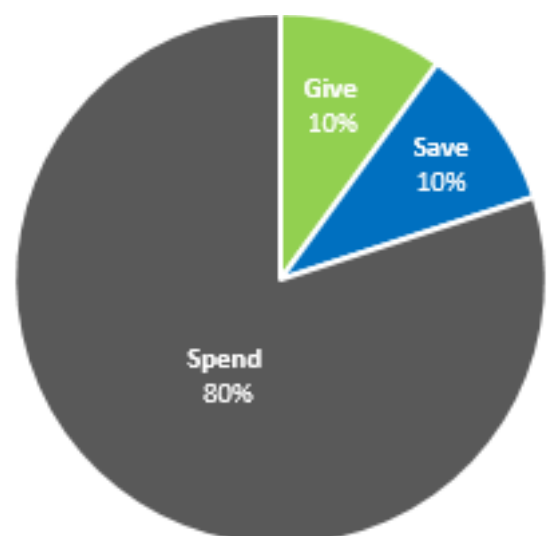
- Make a list of all the things that you are thankful for
- Appreciate those who serve you
- Teach your children to notice those who sacrifice for them
- Teach children to say __thank you
- Children who practised thankfulness daily reported higher levels of alertness, enthusiasm, determination, __attentiveness and energy (David Staal, *Lessons kids Need to Learn*, p.41)

Generosity:

God has done so much for us, out of appreciation we should want to give to Him and to others. Lifelong habits are easily developed in early years. So start teaching your kids the principles of generosity early.

Giving 10% - Saving 10% - Spending 80%

God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). When God’s people are in trouble, be ready to help (Romans 12:13). It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).



Lead by example and talk about generosity with your kids often. Involve them in your giving.

"If your life screams that you live in the acquisition mode, then your children will be less apt to be in the relinquishing mode. We never look more like God than when we give."

(Dave Stone,p.85)

Hospitality:

"It doesn't matter what your house looks like, how humble, how opulent. What matters is how you treat people, how valued they feel after spending time with you."(Dave Stone)

Jesus knew the importance of importance when He wanted to forge a relationship with someone, He sat down to a meal with that person.

- Road to Emmaus – He was not recognised until they sat and Jesus broke the bread.
- It might just be 'dinner' to you, but to others around the table it could be the moment they recognise Jesus for the very first time.

Hospitality gives families a purpose beyond themselves. They (families) exist to serve God and those around them in their church, school and communities.

Service – We Love You Too:

- It is another opportunity to respond to what God has done for us
- It is an important part of spiritual formation
- "Jesus came not to be served, but to serve." (Matthew 20-28)
- "If we do not serve, the accumulation of knowledge only hardenour hearts." (Andrew Murray)
- "Faith is a verb - an action. It results from our actions with others, it changes and expands through our actions with others, and it expresses itself daily in our actions with others."
(John Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith*, p.87)
- "Faith without action is dead." (James 2:17)

Why With Family?

Involvement in family service projects during childhood and adolescence has a powerful impact on young people's growth in faith. (Search Institute)

"We learn caring, and we learn it first in family life. Parents model for their children both in their family relationships and in relationships with others in the community."

(Robert Wuthnow. In Diana Garland. *Inside Out Families*)

"Many of these churches have discovered that once parents recognize their obligation to direct the spiritual development of their children and then recognize how integral serving others is

in that journey, they are open to serving alongside their youngsters in meaningful projects.”

(George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, p. 113)

Serving at Home:

It's not as exciting as a mission trip to Africa, but contributing at home is truly the foundation for a lifetime of service. The small acts of kindness done at home show that caring is a “natural” part of life. Here are ideas you can use to get kids serving at home.

- **Helper's Hints** - On slips of paper, have kids write or draw a picture of a way to serve each family member. Then place the slips in a decorated shoebox. For example, kids might write, “Make Mom's bed,” “Give a hug,” or “Do the dishes.” Each morning kids can choose a slip of paper and use the “hint” to serve someone that day. Periodically have kids come up with new ideas to add to their boxes at home.
- **Flower Power** - Younger children can create six construction-paper flowers, while older kids may enjoy arranging six artificial flowers in a decorative plastic cup. Have kids write one way they'll serve their families on each flower. Kids can place the flowers at home where they'll see them every day and remember to serve.
- **Love Language** - Discuss with kids how service is doing what someone else needs, not simply doing what we like to do for others. Then ask kids to identify meaningful ways they can show love to their families. Have kids create a service plan for the following week and keep a short journal of people's reactions to their acts of service. Share reports the following week.
- **Service Celebration** - Challenge kids to complete one act of kindness for each family member during the week. In your classroom, have kids share ways they served their families so other kids get new ideas. Then serve the kids snacks as a celebration of their service.
- **Table Talk** – Use the service discussion starter card to talk with your family about how they can serve others. _____

Serving the Community:

Seventy-three percent of kids believe they can make a difference in their communities. We only need to provide opportunities for children to act on this belief. Try these opportunities.

- **Backyard games and crafts** – Help your children organise weekly or monthly activities for the children in your neighbourhood.
- **Hospitality** – Include your family preparing food and inviting neighbours and their

children to your home for a meal or afternoon tea.

- **Volunteer to read.** Libraries and schools are always looking for volunteer readers. Offer to staff your public library's reading hour with families from your church, or encourage kids to help younger readers at their schools outside regular classes.
- **Make birthday cards** and or gifts for people in your neighbourhood and nursing homes.
- **Be a good neighbour.** Older kids can help neighbours by weeding, mowing, painting, house-sitting, or pet-sitting. Pre-schoolers enjoy leaving flowers or handmade cards on doorsteps.
- **Give something special.** Encourage families to clean closets by giving gently used clothing and toys directly to less fortunate families or organizations supporting families in need.
- **Car Wash** - Wash car windshields for free. A Bible scripture can be left under wiper blades when finished.
- **Activity bags** – Create activity bags for hospitalised children.
- **Free water bottles** with a scripture text at community events.
- **Snack Attack** - Identify nearby parks and sports fields, and recruit enough parent volunteers to have one adult per five kids who can visit the park as a group. Arm each group with individually wrapped snacks such as cereal bars, popsicles, or fruit snacks, or juice boxes. Pack the snacks in a box for each group with a sign that reads, "Free Snacks from the kids at (your ministry's name)." Have kids meet at your church. Start with a prayer, asking God to help kids meet the people he wants them to, and then head out to the parks and fields. Encourage kids to chat with their newfound acquaintances by asking questions such as their names, favourite sports, or what schools they attend as they distribute snacks. This "just because" act of kindness can help befriend neighbours and opens the door for inviting families to church or to an upcoming family or children's ministry event.
- **Toy Drive** - Kids in your ministry can sponsor seasonal toy drives several times throughout the year to collect specific, new seasonal items. Contact community agencies that supply children's needs such as a homeless shelter, women's safe house, law enforcement, social services, and your fire department. Ask for their wish lists of items that would directly help. Once the collection time is up, have kids gather the items and place stickers on them that say, "Just to make you smile! From the kids at (your church/ministry name)." Before you take your kids to deliver the toys to the community agencies, pray for the children who'll receive each item.
- **Bear Hugs** - This special outreach gives your kids an opportunity to comfort children in crisis. Having soft, lovable cuddles to give to kids in seriously stressful situations is

meaningful not only to the child but the emergency responders as well. Collect new soft bears from children and adults at church. During your children's and adult worship services, invite people to bring up their bears. After the animals are up front, have your senior pastor pray that the gifts so lovingly given will bless hurting children in your community. At the end of your services, kids can box up the stuffed animals and help you deliver them to a local police station or fire department.

Help the Local Environment:

- Plant a flower garden at a senior home and/or clean up a yard.
- Clean up a park, or beach or parking lot.
- Organise a recycling of books

Serving at Church:

Provide opportunities for kids and their families to serve at church with these ideas.

- **Toy Wash** - Children can help your Beginners by washing toys. Pre-schoolers and preteens can work together to scrub plastic toys.
- **Birthday Party for Jesus** - Have an "after Christmas" party where children can give their gently used toys to your children's ministry or a shelter in honour of Jesus.
- **Family Workday** - Announce a workday for families at your church. Make a list of chores such as vacuuming, painting, gardening, or spring cleaning. Provide coffee, juice, and doughnuts. Create "To Do" and "Done" columns on a wall, and write instructions for each job on a sticky note. Post the notes on the "To Do" side. Families can choose their projects and celebrate by moving the sticky note to the "Done" column when they finish.
- **Upper Primaries/Juniors** – give children ownership by giving them a ministry position and allow them to work alongside adults as apprentices. Give them training opportunities and feedback.
- **"I'm Serving God" Buttons** - Have kids design buttons that say, "I'm serving God!" Discuss the various ways people serve in your church, then have children thank these people with a handmade button. Give every child a button, too, as you celebrate their service at church.
- **Connection Point** - As families walk into your church, and are greeted, but kids are often bypassed or overlooked. Set up a roster and train your kids specifically to connect with other kids and welcome them. Prep kids with friendly conversation starters such as, "What's your school like?" or, "What's your favourite TV show?" Each week, have two or three kids rotate serving at the connection point. Encourage greeters to ask other kids their names and to introduce themselves. Greeters can give visiting kids a small gift from

your ministry, and then walk with kids and their families to the appropriate ministry area.

- **Read Me a Story** - Kids who love to read can share that love while serving younger kids with this idea. Invite older kids in your children's ministry to read a children's Bible story aloud to younger children in Beginner or Kindergarten. Coach readers to point out illustrations as they read, speak clearly and with enthusiasm, share their favourite parts of each situation, and invite little ones to share their favourite parts, too. Let your readers introduce themselves to the little ones and say what they love best about reading. Then let them dive in to the Bible. Close each reading session with a prayer of thanks for God's Word.

Serving World Missions:

- A short mission trip within or outside your country or outside with at least one parent provides a shared experience that build faith.
- Encourage children to start an investment project to save money to help missions.
- Encourage children to learn about and support children around the world in their mission offering.
- **Work through aid agencies** to help needy children and people.
 - ADRA www.adra.org.au/
 - Asian Aid www.asianaid.org.au/
 - International Children's Care www.iccaustralia.org.au/
 - World Vision www.worldvision.com.au/
 - Red Cross www.redcross.org.au



THREE WAYS TO BE ON MISSION WITH YOUR KIDS THIS EASTER

John Murchison

When encouraging families to be missional, it's often best to focus outside the walls of the church. Just like Jesus entered into our world in order to share God's love with us, we best share God's love with others by entering into their world rather than asking them to come into ours.

However, Easter is a different story. Here's why:

- Many people who wouldn't consider going to church on a "regular" Sunday would say "yes" to an invitation on Easter
- Most preachers will explicitly and clearly preach the gospel of Jesus's death and resurrection on behalf of sinners this weekend
- Most churches, knowing that many guests will join them, make plans to go the extra mile to be welcoming to guests

In light of this unique opportunity that Easter provides, here are three ways to be missional with your kids this Easter:

1. Have Your Children Invite Their Friends

The first way to be missional this Easter is to ask your kids if they know anyone that they would like to invite to church. Then, make plans to give them an opportunity to invite them! Sit down with them and make a phone call, or try to arrange a get-together with that family.

Chances are that your child's friend will want to come along. And if the child wants to come, then the parents will make an effort to be there, even if they wouldn't have accepted an invitation from you. You know this from your own

experience – we love to say “yes” to our kids. Otherwise, Chuck E Cheese would be out of business. Through the invitation of your children, entire families may decide to come to church with you, where they will all hear the gospel preached.

2. Go With Them

Once a family accepts your family’s invitation, make plans to go with them. To be truly hospitable to this family you have invited takes a lot more than saying, “Text me when you have dropped your kids off and we can sit together.”

Put yourself in this guest family’s shoes for a minute. Imagine that you have accepted an invitation to go to a Jewish friend’s synagogue on Saturday, and you’re bringing your whole family. Think about all the questions that you would have. What should we wear? Where do I park? Will my kids be safe? Do I need to bring anything for them to do or eat? How will I know where to take my kids when I get there?

Every guest family at your church will have the same fears and questions as they pull up to our parking lot. If you invite a family to come with you, take some time to think through how you can answer those questions for them and make them feel at ease about attending church with you.

Perhaps you could even offer to drive to their house and let them follow you to campus. That way, you can park with them, walk them right up to the children’s check-in area, help them through the process, and sit with them in service.

3. Involve Them In Your Traditions

Of all three points, this one is probably the hardest one, yet it has the potential to have the biggest impact. Most of us have family traditions built up around this holiday, and changing them to include another family is a sacrifice. However, inviting the family that came to church with you to be a part of your Easter brunch, egg hunt, or whatever you do after church could be life-changing for them. Extending your time together past the church service gives the parents a chance to process what they heard with you while the kids are hunting eggs or hanging out together.

In addition, God may use your children to share the gospel with the other children while they are playing. One of my favorite Easter stories from recent years is a family who hosted a Muslim family at their house for lunch on Easter Sunday. The kids were in the back room, playing,

while the parents were having dessert and coffee. The mom walked by the kids at one point and overheard her son repeating what he had just heard at church to the boy from the Muslim family. The parents thought that they were going to only share the gospel with the parents that day, but God used their son to share the gospel with the children, too!

Don't forget that the Spirit of God that raised Jesus Christ from the grave is in you as well (Romans 8:11). And that Spirit can use you and your kids to bring more brothers and sisters into the family of God. Will you join me in praying that He will do that this Sunday, in our children's ministries, our youth groups, and in "big church" all across the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Murchison is the Director of Children's Ministry at The Austin Stone. He is husband to Sarah and father to Waverly and Lucy. He is passionate about making disciples of children rather than "mini-Pharisees," and about teaching children the gospel over morality. He desires to help parents see themselves as missionaries on mission to and through their children.

This article was sourced from the Verge Network website www.vergenetwork.org



25 SIMPLE WAYS TO BE MISSIONAL IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Verge Network

I have found that it is often helpful to have practical ideas to start engaging the people around me. Most of the things on this list are normal, everyday things that many people are already doing. The hope is that we would do these things with Gospel intentionality. This means we do them:

- In the normal rhythms of life pursuing to meet and engage new people
- Prayerfully watching and listening to the Holy Spirit to discern where God is working.
- Looking to boldly, humbly, and contextually proclaim the Gospel in word and deed.

Below is a list of my top 25. Not all of these are for everyone, but hopefully there will be several ideas on the list that God uses to help you engage your neighbours. Would love to hear stories of how you have lived some of these out or other ways you have engaged your neighbours.

1. Stay outside in the front yard longer while watering the yard
2. Walk your dog regularly around the same time in your neighbourhood
3. Sit on the front porch and letting kids play in the front yard
4. Pass out baked goods (fresh bread, cookies, brownies, etc.)
5. Invite neighbours over for dinner
6. Attend and participate in HOA functions
7. Attend the parties invited to by neighbours
8. Do a food drive or coat drive in winter and get neighbours involved
9. Have a game night (yard games outside, or board games inside)

10. Art swap night – bring out what you're tired of and trade with neighbours
11. Grow a garden and give out extra produce to neighbours
12. Have an Easter egg hunt on your block and invite neighbours use their front yards
13. Start a weekly open meal night in your home
14. Do a summer BBQ every Friday night and invite others to contribute
15. Create a block/ street email and phone contact list for safety
16. Host a sports game watching party
17. Host a coffee and dessert night
18. Organize and host a ladies artistic creation night
19. Organize a tasting tour on your street (everyone sets up food and table on front porch)
20. Host a movie night and discussion afterwards
21. Start a walking/running group in the neighbourhood
22. Start hosting a play date weekly for other stay at home parents
23. Organize a carpool for your neighbourhood to help save gas
24. Volunteer to coach a local little league sports team
25. Have a front yard ice cream party in the summer

Do you have some other ideas or ways that you or your Missional Community have engaged your neighborhood? Let us know below in the Comments section!

Missional Tip: Pick one of these ideas and act on it this week. Let us know on our Facebook page how it went!

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4 WAYS TO SERVE OTHERS WITH LITTLE ONES AT HOME

Angela Suh

Ah, I feel I am just now emerging from the great fog that surrounds moms with newborns and toddlers at home. My kids are now 6, 5 and 3 – which means that we survived days with three kids ages three and under. I've watched some old videos recently and thought back to those days where showers were few, the house was a constant disaster and more often than not there was spit-up on my clothes or in my hair (so gross).

I know those days are often difficult, lonely, mundane. I had many days where I just felt like I was operating in an isolated bubble, disconnected to everyone. I wanted to still serve others, but what could that look like with these littles in tow?

Here are a few things that worked for me in this particular season:

1. Pray

I know, that seems so simple, right? Honestly, before I had children, I don't think I really had much faith in or understanding of prayer. The book, *A Praying Life* by Paul Miller, was so helpful in getting me started. When you are stinky, sleep-deprived and bound to your couch while you nurse your infant, you can still pray. As you scan through Facebook and read status updates, you can pray. When you are up at 4 a.m. and all is quiet, you can pray. As you are walking around your neighborhood pushing the stroller along, you can ask God to move in the hearts of these people. Anywhere and at all times, we can pray . . . and God has so much that He intends to do through the prayers of His saints.

2. Write Encouraging Letters, Texts, and Emails

I want to do such a better job at this. In just a few minutes, you can write thoughtful words and send them to someone. I have been on the receiving end of these words and man, even three sentences jotted down or a short text can make such an impact. For those other moms like you that are out there, feeling alone or struggling with how God is working in them in this season – all the Truth that you need to be reminded of, they need it, too. And as you write, more often than not, God is reminding you as well. So many times I've texted something about God's sovereignty and His working all things for our good and His glory – and then I've looked around and realized that yes, this is true, even for me, even right now.

3. Meals

Likely, there are people that you are connected to that are sick, or having babies, or having a difficult time, and they could use a meal dropped off at the door so there is one less thing they need to worry about in a day. Now, when I sign up to deliver a meal – it is usually the only single thing that I plan to get done that day. Between naps and changing diapers and tantrums – I know it can seem impossible to get even one thing accomplished. But, having received meals in times of transition or grieving, I know it means much to the person that you have made such an effort for. I have felt so so loved by people showing up and hugging me, giving me food and asking how things are going.

4. Have People Live With You

This is obviously a little more involved than the previous ideas. I've written before about having people live with us, but I want to say again – it is both wonderful and difficult, both blesses you and stretches you. We've had people live with us during various seasons, including when we had little babies. We've mostly had women who were college students, family members or about-to-be-marrieds. Though opening up your home does provide a room and a bed, it also serves people by allowing them into your lives, to be a part of your family, which I've found is so much more of a blessing.

Being a mom with young kids at home is a special season with all sorts of wonders and joys, and limits and responsibilities. Some days, serving your family and keeping the kids alive is all you can do. But, other days there is grace to do a little more and to serve the Body, even amidst the craziness and chaos.

This article was sourced from the Verge Network website www.vergenetwork.org



TWO LIES THAT KEEP FAMILIES FROM BEING MISSIONAL

John Murchison

When talking with parents of young children about the idea of being in a Missional Community, of joining a small group of believers who work together to declare and demonstrate the gospel, I usually get one of two responses.

Parents either say,

"Sounds great! Where should I drop my kids off? Or will you send a babysitter to my house?"

or, they say,

"That sounds great for other people, but right now I have children, and my primary calling is to disciple them. Maybe once they're grown up, then I can join a Missional Community."

For some reason, many parents have an underlying assumption that they can't do both of these things at the same time. They feel they must choose between being in a Missional Community or spending time with their children.

I don't think parents who say these things are bad people. Quite the opposite, in fact. I think they are trying to be faithful to what God is calling them to both as parents and as Christians on mission. And they're frustrated by the fact that they don't think they can do both well.

I've been wondering where this underlying assumption comes from, and I think it largely stems from two lies that we, the American church, have told them: the lie of Christian age segregation, and the lie of event-based Christian ministry.

1. The Lie of Christian Age Segregation

In the American church today, it's far more common for families to learn about God separately than to attend church events together. Unless it's a purely social event, like a potluck or a picnic, church members expect there to be some place to put their children, and we have by and large accommodated them.

As a result, most activities or events of a church involving worship, Bible study, prayer, and the like are completely segregated by age. Children over here, students (or youth) over there, and parents in the other building. We've lied to parents, telling them that the most vital parts of church life must be separated by age.

Before you start thinking I only support a family-integrated church, let me be clear: I'm a big fan of age-specific teaching on Sundays. I believe that Sundays are best utilized for parents to connect with and worship God, getting "filled up" for another week of teaching, leading, and discipling their kids throughout the week.

I also think that children need to be taught the Word of God in a way that speaks directly to them. I like Sunday children's ministries. In fact, a big part of my job is leading one.

That said, I think that if every spiritual church event is segregated by age, then we are missing out on all that the family of God is meant to be. It is good for children to hear adults discuss the Scriptures, pray, and sing. It's good for adults to invest in the lives of children other than their own. It's good to worship God together, from infants to adults. I believe that can be done well in a small group of believers, in a Missional Community.

Are there times in a Missional Community where children should not be included, due to the nature of the discussion or event? Of course. But I believe that those times are few and far between. For most of the gatherings of your Missional Community, having children involved is perfectly acceptable, if not beneficial.

We've got to get rid of the lie that children should be neither seen nor heard at church, and especially in our Missional Communities.

2. The Lie of Event-Based Ministry

In the interest of serving the people of God, churches today tend to make an event for everything. Want to pray? Come to prayer meeting! Want to meet other members of our

church? Come to our potluck! Want to study the Bible? Come to Men's/Women's Bible Study! Want to serve others in the city? Come to our Saturday Serve Day!

Events are useful, and they can't and shouldn't go away. However, I worry that what the proliferation of Christian events communicates is that the Christian life is lived in spurts of specific activity. Subtly, and unintentionally, the lie is told that ministry is primarily made up of discrete, individual events.

For a person who knowingly or unknowingly believes this lie, it's easy to see how overwhelming the Christian life can become. If you try to block out individual time blocks for Bible study, evangelism, serving the poor, prayer, discipling younger believers, investing in dating your spouse, growing in knowledge of God, volunteering at church, connecting with Christian community, accountability, teaching the Bible to your kids, praying as a family... and on and on... it's easy to see how your iCal can reach its breaking point pretty quickly.

When you add to the calendar all the other events of family life, from sporting events to dance practices to orchestra rehearsals, it's easy to see how many families opt out before even trying. Because of the lie of event-based ministry, many parents feel there's just not enough time in the week for a Missional Community.

Relieving the Pressure

The Bible calls us to all of the things I listed above, and more. However, the Bible also emphatically states that our walk with God should not be burdensome. As Jesus says,

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30, ESV)

This is good news for those who are feeling overwhelmed by the activity of the Christian life. Yes, we are to serve and lead as the Bible calls us to, but this should result in rest for our souls, not burden. But how can we get there?

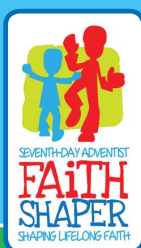
The truth is that a Missional Community, when properly lived out, can help dispel the lie of event-based ministry. Rather than one more thing to add to your schedule, it can be a way to integrate these many activities together. Through a Missional Community, you can encourage other believers, learn from God's Word, serve others in the community, share the gospel with

nonbelievers, and disciple your children. All these can be integrated together, over time. Through dispelling the lie of event-based ministry, Christianity stops being a lot of things you do, and starts being an identity that you live.

This article was sourced from the Verge Network website www.vergenetwork.org

7 Essential Faith Experiences

P Participation



"To participate in the life of the faith community, children need to be a part of this community. And to be a part of the community they need to be present for its central practices. They need to rub shoulders with all sorts of folks who make up this community.... They need to be seen as active and valued members of their faith community." (Ivy Beckwith and David Casinos, Children's Ministry in the Way of Jesus, 2013)

- Be intentional about allowing children to be a part of the church community.
- Welcome children into intergenerational worship.
- Ensure that they participate, use their gifts and feel that they belong.
- Give children equal opportunity to contribute and have a voice.
- Guide and mentor them to participate in meaningful ways.



When the religious leaders saw the outrageous things he was doing, and heard all the children running and shouting through the Temple, "Hosanna to David's Son!" they were up in arms and took him to task. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" Jesus said, "Yes, I hear them. And haven't you read in God's Word, 'From the mouths of children and babies I'll furnish a place of praise?'" (Matthew 21:15-16, The Message)

7 Essential Faith Experiences

S Service and Mission



"As families serve together, they gain a deeper understanding of one another and God. They find their faith more resilient and meaningful. Their children develop a faith that helps them stick to the church and to their beliefs into young adulthood." (Diana Garland, Inside Out Families, 2011)

- Encourage children and families to build friendships with people living near them.
- Provide opportunities and resources for families to serve others together — home; neighbourhood; church; world.
- Provide opportunities for children to respond with compassion and generosity.
- Provide resources and opportunities for children to share their faith story.
- Provide outreach opportunities with and for children.



Each one of you should use whatever gifts you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace." (1 Peter 4:10)

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