

JOINING GENERATIONS

We will tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the Lord and his might,
and the wonders that he has done...
which he commanded our ancestors
to teach their children;
that the next generation might know them...
so that they should set their hope in God
Psalm 78: 4-7

Summer is the perfect time to consider connecting the generations. School is out. Schedules are less full. Gathering places can include the great outdoors - yards and parks and campgrounds and arboretums and beaches and retreat centers and resorts. Food, clothing, and entertainment can all be casual. What an opportunity to deepen relationships and make memories.

Families often gather during the summer already - for weddings, reunions, vacations together, or impromptu celebrations. Take lots of pictures and create a scrapbook or photo collage or photo gallery. Bring old photos and find out who is in them, what they were doing, how they are related to your family. Label the photos. Tell stories. Write them down or audio or videotape the oldest generations sharing family stories. Ask the children to draw pictures or keep a journal of what they want to remember about the family gathering. When the gathering is over, look at the pictures and photos, read the stories and journals. Ask, "Where was God in this time together?"

Neighbors come out of hiding and hibernation this time of year, to do yard work, go for long walks, bike, play, or simply call a greeting across the fence. This might be the year to plan a block party or to invite neighbors, new and old, to a potluck picnic in your yard. Check in with those neighbors with whom you've been out of touch. Catch up with those you've only seen sporadically. Give new neighbors a map of the neighborhood, with names, addresses, phone numbers, and ages of the children in each house. Then, invite them to a neighborhood gathering to get to know more neighbors. Ask neighbors who have lived longest in the area if they will tell all of you about what the neighborhood was like when they moved in and what changes they have seen.

Church families, the whole congregation, can gather to celebrate church anniversaries, the return of children and youth from Bible camp, vacation church school, a mission trip, or even the Fourth of July! For church anniversaries, have a member born in all of the decades represented in your congregation tell one thing they cherish about your congregation. For those returning from a mission trip or camp, ask them to share the ways they experienced the presence of God while they were gone. Or, on a Sunday, gather after worship, serving refreshments that appeal to all generations and play some simple, engaging get acquainted games. For example, ask all of those with January birthdays to gather in one area and share their favorite and least favorite thing about their birthday month and one best birthday memory. Do that for all twelve months,

naturally mingling the generations. Have participants share favorite Bible stories or the stories about how they have gotten to know God.

What wonderful opportunities there are this season to connect the generations, one of God's good ideas!

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. Plan a family gathering, inviting each person to bring an old photo, a family story, and a dish to share.
2. Pull together a neighborhood picnic. Wear name tags so that all are comfortable in calling one another by name. Have games and activities that mix generations and encourage conversation.
3. As a family, read a story from a children's story Bible. Wonder together
 - who is the person in the Bible story that is most like you?
 - who is the person in the story you most want to be like?
 - what does God want our family to know and understand?
 - what does God want our family to do?
4. Tour your family home. If you have possessions handed down in your family, tell stories about the people who once owned it.
5. Visit a historic site in your area. Learn the story about an earlier time.