

7 Gifts

for church & home

Summary Gift Three

The Gift of Quality Time

INFORMATION & DISCUSSION GUIDE

Why quality time is so important

Children spell love as T-I-M-E.

The qualities that will determine how successful children will be in school and in life are influenced most by their parents. God in his wisdom chose families as the means by which faith would be passed on to the next generation. In a world where parents are more time poor than ever, we have the challenge to find ways to spend time, lots of undivided attention time, with our children.

Making the time usually involves sacrifice and tough choices. But it's worth it. The time we spend with children now will pay big dividends for the rest of their lives, now and into the future. It is the biggest and best investment we can make that we rebound down through the ages to eternity.

Kurt Brunner and Steve Stroope in their book *It Starts at Home* (2010) says that the "secret formula" for passing on values to your children was to take the time to create an environment where families had fun together. "When we play with our kids today, we are earning the right to shape their values tomorrow." When we wrestle with our boys in the lounge room, we have done more to make our values stick than when we read them a bible passage. Both are important, but the former makes the latter more meaningful.

Reggie Joiner (*Playing for Keeps*, 2013) says that the "most significant gifts we can give the next generation are what we give them over time. That makes what you do this week, next week, and the week after, strategic. As parents or leaders, it's important that we realize there are certain things that can only be communicated, understood, discovered over time." We have 936 weeks between birth and when our child finishes high school. When we truly understand this, parents and churches will be more strategic about this small window in time.

In order to impact our children for eternity then it is important that we take the time to spend the time with them now, because every week matters!

What can CHURCHES do?

Program less so families can have more "together time."

1. DON'T FILL UP THE FAMILY'S SPARE TIME WITH EXTRA CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Sometimes we can make our families (who are already busy during the week) so busy doing church events that they never actually get the time to be together. Sometimes declaring a Sabbath afternoon sacred family time is the best gift that we can give to families. Some churches actually program their church services for later on Sabbath afternoon to allow the families the morning to be together. When you do have to run church program ask yourself the question, 'How is this contributing to family life?' Try and make as many programs as possible intergenerational.

2. PLAN SPECIAL FAMILY EVENTS THAT BRING FAMILIES TOGETHER

Families are busy and time poor and so a church that is serious about leveraging the impact of parents (who are the primary spiritual mentors of children) will plan special social events and excursions that bring families together and creates special memories. These gifts of time allow parents to be fun and playful around their children allowing values to stick.

3. MAKE YOUR MINISTRIES AND PROGRAMS INTERGENERATIONAL

Extensive research tells us that parents are the primary faith influencers in their children's lives. This means that parent need to be encouraged to be involved in their children's lives rather than excluded from it. The more we can involved parents and cheer them on from the sidelines the better it will be for our programs and

our children.

4. TEACH PARENTS THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY TOGETHERNESS

The church's role is help our parents to be the best parents they can possibly be. Parents need to know that we are in their corner cheering them on. So being intentional about highlighting the importance of family from our pulpits and in our small group teaching is one of the best things that we can do for our parents.

5. CELEBRATE FAMILIES IN YOUR CHURCH

In an age when the family unit is under attack from many different angles the church needs to raise the profile of family and celebrate and support the family in all its forms. Family togetherness has a myriad of benefits for our children. Children raised in intact families by happily married parents tend to be more religious in adulthood. This "religiosity inheritance" was even greater among children who were raised in families with two happily married biological parents. Where the family unit has broken down the church is the ideal institution to provide strong mentors for the family unit.

What can FAMILIES do?

Create regular time for your children.

1. TAKE YOUR CHILDREN OUT ON SPECIAL MEMORY EVENTS

Just spending time with your children and journeying with them helps you know where they are at and what is on their hearts. Creating special memories with your child will pay dividends as they move into their teenage and adult years.

2. GIVE YOUR CHILDREN ONE-ON-ONE TIME

Parents need to take time to date their children. This means planning a special event with each of your children on a regular basis and letting your child know that your gift of time to them is for them to enjoy. Fathers dating their daughters and mothers dating their sons and vice versa are some of the greatest memories our children will have.

3. CREATE SHARED HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

Shared hobbies and interests takes time and is something that you can do together. Hobbies and interests also get kids away from their hyper-electronic world. It also gives you as a parent time to concentrate on something together while you listen to your child share their hopes, dreams and fears. This appears to be especially beneficial to fathers and sons.

4. GO THE EXTRA MILE TO BE IN THEIR PICTURE

Parents need to take the time go the extra mile to stay in their children's picture especially as they get older. This is never easy and is often messy but is a necessary part of parenting. Children knowing that they have their parents in their corner no matter what gives them a sense of security and the desire to do great things.

5. NEVER GIVE UP STRIVING FOR THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILD

My children need to know I will never stop fighting for a right relationship with them. Of all the strategies and values, fighting for a right relationship with your kids is the most important. Parents who fight for a right relationship will be ones who will have a lifetime of relationship and influence in their kids' lives.

5 Questions for Boards and Churches to Discuss/Brainstorm

1. WHAT PROGRAMS DO WE NEED TO RENOVATE, ADD OR DELETE IN ORDER TO PRIORITISE FAMILY TIME?

2. HOW CAN WE MAKE ALL OUR PROGRAMS TRULY FAMILY FOCUSED?

3. HOW CAN WE BETTER CELEBRATE AND MENTOR THE FAMILIES IN OUR CHURCH?

4. HOW CAN WE TEACH OUR PARENTS THAT TAKING TIME FOR THEIR CHILDREN IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT GIFTS THAT THEY CAN GIVE THEIR CHILDREN?

5. WHAT STRATEGIC STEPS CAN WE PUT IN PLACE RIGHT NOW TO ENSURE THAT FAMILY TIME AT CHURCH AND HOME IS MADE A PRIORITY?
