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TELL ME A STORY ...

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Our youngest grandchild, who is six years old, joins us every Sunday night for family dinner with the rest of our local family. Invariably, she asks both her papa and nana to "Tell me a story ...". Sometimes she will prescribe the characters in the story or the content or the lesson to be learned. Instead of being bored or rolling her eyes at the familiar tales, she leans into them.

I just wish I had done this more often with my grandparents, so that today I would remember their stories and pass them on to their great grandchildren and great great grandchildren.

Jesus told stories to his most intimate disciples and to those he healed and to assembled masses, over and over and over again. Consider how easy it is to remember the core of Jesus' teachings by remembering the stories or parables or metaphors or similes, in which he embedded his greatest values. Why? To make them memorable. To reach across the millennia and across cultures and languages. To make them core to who we are and remind us of whose we are.

So, why should we tell stories to those we love and teach and want to know better?

- This is the way we help others to know us, really know us. This isn't just about sharing facts, but sharing our core values and the experiences or tales that make us who we are.
- Yes, it is also an engaging way of sharing information. If a plate, a picture, a rug, or a chair have a story, it helps others to see some of our "things" as having a value other than the one that our culture ascribes to them.
- And what about those who are no longer able to tell their own stories or engage with the children in our midst? We can share some of their stories to make them more 3-dimensional and fuller than their present reality. Stories are a great way of bridging the generations.
- This helps them know they belong not just to the here and now, but to a long line of those that have gone before them. It gives them identity.
- It may also be a way to know about people no longer alive or in our lives, who have also shaped us ... and them.
- Tell children the stories you know about their lives before they were old enough to remember. Use family photos or memorabilia. They will cherish these stories, too.
- Stories also share the values and attitudes we hope they will learn from us and live to pass on to the next generation and the next.
- They will learn our fallibility, that we have made mistakes. (Oh, yes, share these stories, too.) And they will hear both about forgiveness - God's and others' - and learn that we are resilient. They can trust that their worst moment is not the one that defines them ... or us.
- If it also teaches them to be kinder and more forgiving to others, isn't that a lesson we'd love to pass on?

What memorable stories did others tell you? Can you share them, even when those original story tellers are no longer in our midst?

What stories do you wish you had heard again? Whom might you ask to tell those stories?

If you are feeling that your stories aren't that riveting, how about reading the stories in books? The Bible is full of stories that are also our stories. Can you tell those stories or read them to another generation? Children's Bibles count. Help children find themselves in God's story and God in their stories. This is the way that for thousands of years people of faith have passed on the faith

Links to learn more!

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