
Session: Memory Walls

Description

The practice of stability is about committing to the daily life of place. In short, it's about staying put. In the Benedictine context, it means that unless a monk is sent somewhere else by their superiors, or they receive special dispensation, they stay at that monastery for their whole lives. Every member of the community commits to seeking God together, in good times and bad, for a lifetime.

In today's culture, while we are blessed with many wonderful opportunities and choices, this can also be a curse, as we seem to be in a state of dis-ease, constantly searching for something better. What the monks teach us through their vow of stability is that ultimately, we can't escape ourselves. When things get challenging in the family, it can seem easier to check-out than to stay the course and work through differences. The idea that things will be better someplace else can (at times) be an illusion. Just like families, the monks live, work, pray and play together. Because they have committed to stay put, when conflicts arise there's a greater incentive to work things out, apologize or forgive.ⁱⁱⁱ

Stability is less about the uniqueness of each individual person in the family and more about what happens when we are all together. Stability, in today's context, is about the discipline of staying put to work through our longings and struggles as a family and committing to address and resolve the challenges that are central to our lives. It starts with a foundation of love.

In this session you will create a memory wall. A memory wall is a visual representation of your shared experiences together. Each person in the family will have an opportunity to color or write a word/words representing a positive shared memory with each of you. You'll then place them on a blank wall and share your memories with the group.

Materials Needed

A stack of white paper (5 family members = 5 sheets of paper per family member etc.), colors, markers or things to decorate your word/art, tape or something to attach the artwork to the wall.

Handouts

None

What are your shared memories?

Read aloud the quote or
scripture

“Commitment is what forms a promise into reality.” *Abraham Lincoln*

Questions for discussion
(10 minutes)

1. Has anyone ever broken a commitment to you? How did that feel? Have you ever broken a commitment? How did that feel?
2. Have you ever made a commitment to God? Explain as much as you are comfortable. Have you honored your commitment? Why? Why not?
3. Do you think God really understands our family struggles? Why? Why not?
4. If you believe that Jesus is the son of God, do you think God feels about Jesus the way earthly parents feel about their children? What about it is the same? What about it is different?
5. Are there times when it's better to leave a relationship? Explain. What are some of the positive outcomes of staying even when it's hard?

Rule of life activity

Memory wall

1. Give each person one blank piece of paper for each member of your family (ie; 4 family members = 4 pieces of paper each), pens or pencils and art supplies like color crayons.
 2. Now have each person in the family sit by themselves and think of their favorite fun or positive memory for each member of the family. (10-15 minutes)
 3. Write a word representing that memory or create a picture and color it.
 4. Repeat until you have completed one art/memory for each member of your family.
 5. Now come back together next to the wall you will be using to create your memory wall.
 6. Starting with the youngest, each person (one at a time) gets up, shares each favorite memory and puts their memory art up on the wall.
 7. When you are finished you will have a memory wall. I suggest you leave it up for at least a week.
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Examen

How did it go? Debrief highs and lows

1. Each person shares their favorite part of the conversation / activity and why.
 2. Each person shares their least favorite part and why
 3. Did you do a Serving/Giving activity last week? How did it go?
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Serving /giving ideas for any time this week: Choose one or create your own. These can be done individually or as a group. You will be sharing your serving experience in the next session.

- Write a letter or note telling the story of a favorite memory of a neighbor or friend. Send it to them.
- Bake cookies or treats for a family therapist or counselor and give it to them, thanking them for helping families work through their challenges. You might attach a favorite piece of scripture or a note.
- Make a financial gift to a nonprofit that helps struggling families such as a homeless shelter, or the TEARS foundation which helps families who have lost a child.
- Tell someone that you are sorry for something that came between you, even if it was in the past. Ask forgiveness.
- Spend a day at a nursing home listening to seniors share stories of their families. Help them make a memory wall of their own!

ⁱ <http://blog.adw.org/2012/07/a-reflection-on-the-benedictine-vow-of-stability/>

ⁱⁱ These comments are not in references to abuse, or situations where it's not safe emotionally, spiritually or physically to stay in the family environment. Stability in this context references normal every-day family challenges and conflicts.