

Session: Family Stories

Description

Sometimes we learn how but we forget why. We might develop routines or rhythms, whether they be for spiritual growth or not, without thinking about why we started doing them in the first place. *Conversatio*, which is a Latin word meaning “A way of life, conduct or behavior”,ⁱ is about transformation and formation - moving out of our comfort zones in order to learn and grow. *Conversatio* helps us cultivate habits that nurture personal (and family) refreshment, spiritual renewal and generosity toward others over a lifetime. This isn't easy to do. As we experience the ordinary and extraordinary obstacles that are part of every life, we sometimes feel that life isn't fair.

This makes me think of Moses. I have always felt the sting of unfairness in his story. For those who may not be familiar, Moses was one of the key figures and Holy Heroes in the Bible. He helped God's people escape from Egypt and travel over many years to the Promised Land. The journey was difficult.

He didn't sign up for this role. He was humble felt unqualified and unworthy. Why would God choose someone who stutters to change the world? But Moses served so faithfully, so diligently. He gave up everything - literally gave his life in the end. He died and didn't get to cross over into the Promised Land with his people. I understand that there was a purpose, but I'm a human and I want things to be fair. I also understand that where Moses was going (eternity with God) could never be compared with anything earthly. I get it, especially considering that we humans, as always, would mess the whole thing up once we got to the Promised Land anyway.

But then, after all these years of being slightly irritated at God for doing that to Moses, a little light bulb went on. I began to process that it was never about the destination, it was about God's people, including Moses, living out creation in community and the lessons that come with that. Theologian and author Eugene Peterson helped me understand that spiritual theology isn't about theology. It's about living theology. We tend to have this utopian idea that if God is in it, and we do right, everything will work out in an idyllic way.... Oh the plans of humans.

“The creation/ salvation life isn't thinking about or talking about God, it is living God's gift of a free life of love in families and workplaces under conditions of difficulty, of failure, of disappointment, of heartbreak — conditions of sin and death. And Moses is one of the showcase instances in Scripture of failure and heartbreak, of the way in which conditions of sin and death are unavoidably inherent in community in general, but in the people of God community in particular.”ⁱⁱ - *Eugene Peterson Christ Plays in Ten Thousand places*.

So then what are we supposed to do with that? For me it means that I need to stop thinking about the world's, and my own, ideas of what it means to live with God in a community of real people. I need to stop thinking about who I believe should and shouldn't be allowed “in” regardless of what the world thinks or how I'm judged, or, to be honest, what a pain in the fanny I might think someone might be. God does what God does through and in

community. If I want to be part of it, I need to get on board – right now and right in the middle of the mess. As Mark Batterson says in *Draw the Circle*, “Every generation needs a reformation, tearing down it’s idols and rediscovering ancient truths”.ⁱⁱⁱ

Conversatio is strengthened by rhythms, or activities that support families in their journeys. In this session you will be sharing family stories using key words to trigger memories from your journey together.

Materials Needed

Poster board or large paper, sticky notes and pens or pencils.

Handouts

None

Family Stories

Read aloud the quote or scripture

“In tough and desperate times when your creativity begs to be birthed, loose the confines of the ground; stand up in your faith and walk atop the waves...”

– *Stanice Anderson*

Questions for discussion (10 minutes)

1. Have you ever felt that God treated you unfairly? Explain.
2. Do you think God cares about equity for all people? Explain.
3. Under what circumstances (if any) might God treat different people differently? Why or why not? Explain.
4. Do you think God treated Moses unfairly? Explain.
5. Do you think there is a reason that some people are born in poverty and others aren’t or is it random? Explain.

Rule of life activity

Family stories

1. Shared stories can bond our families together and create a sense of community.
2. Draw a line down the middle of your poster board or large paper.
3. As a family, brainstorm and write down (on separate sticky notes) words or phrases that might trigger a family story. Try to start with at least 6 sticky notes.
4. Examples might be things like “beach trip”, “Grandma Jean’s cooking”, “road trip”, “learning how to do laundry”.

5. Put the sticky notes with the words or phrases up on the left side of the line on the poster board.
6. Have one family member select a sticky note and share an experience using that word or phrase as a story starter.
7. As the other family members are listening, have them jot down words on sticky notes that remind them of a similar story.
8. Add those sticky notes to the left side of the line on the poster board or large paper.
9. Once the first family member is done sharing their experience, move that sticky note to the right side of the line.
10. Now have another family member select a sticky note from the left side of the board and share an experience relating to that sticky note.
11. Repeat until everyone has shared or for as many rounds as you want to do.
12. You might want to save this wall of sticky notes as a reminder of your shared family experiences.

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?

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.

- Sign up as a family to take care of a roundabout or public piece of land to keep it looking beautiful with flowers or other landscaping.
- Make a gift of appreciated stock to a charity. There are double tax benefits for doing this versus a gift of cash.
- Fundraise with your neighbors to pay a local artist to create a piece of community art.
- Purchase a computer and donate it to a local boys and girls club.
- Donate a used car to a local charity.

ⁱ <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/conversatio>

ⁱⁱ Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 263.

ⁱⁱⁱ Mark Batterson, *Draw the Circle: The 40 Day Prayer Challenge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012)