

FALL 2022

ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER



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GREAT LAKES
CONFERENCE
BRETHEN IN CHRIST

A quarterly resource to equip and support congregations in the Great Lakes Conference of the Brethren in Christ for the work of growing lifelong disciples within their faith family and surrounding community.

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CHILDREN & YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP

We are coming up on the “Back to School” season across our states and kids & parents are gearing up for a new academic year. As we begin this journey, I find it is important to remind parents of the power of their words when it comes to sending their kids into the classroom. I often hear people in church circles saying things like “God was kicked out of school years ago” or “Prayer isn’t allowed in school.”

But the truth is that God IS in the schools. That God IS in your child’s classrooms and at your teenager’s lunch tables and in your freshman’s college dorm rooms and in the high school locker rooms.

God is there, fully present and fully able to sustain them as they live for Him.

Friends, our children need to hear that God isn’t quivering in a corner, afraid or tied down. Our God, the God that took on flesh and came to us as a baby, is coming back as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He is not fearful; He is triumphant



So how can we help our children & youth return to school with confidence in their ever-present God? Here are some ideas to share with the parents in your faith communities.

PRAY THEM OUT

Taking the time to say a simple prayer over your child as they head out the door can be so powerful; a reminder that they do not go alone and that you are covering them as they go.

Here’s the prayer I pray over my children each morning:

Father, thank you for _____. Be with him/her as she/he goes to school today. Guard his/her heart in Christ Jesus. Let her/him know that he/she is loved so that he/she is able to love You and love others. Bring _____ home safely and may he/she learn well and love well today.

BRING THEM IN

Make your house the house where all are welcome. If you want to know what your kids are up to and who they are hanging out with, then make sure that your house is prepared to be the house where everyone crashes. Have plenty of snacks on hand and something fun that sets you apart (a trampoline, a movie room, laser tag, a pool, etc).

Tell your kids that their friends are always welcome in your house and mean it – don’t turn aside a child if they are not exactly who you want your kid to be with. Rather, love them like Jesus and ask your child who they know them and why they are friends.

CHILDREN & YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP



And a couple more...

SHOW UP

Most schools have ways that parents and churches can partner with them by supporting a classroom, encouraging teachers, helping with sports, etc. Find out what your child's school needs and be there.

If your child is involved in an afterschool activity, be the one who shows up with water bottles or offers to drive to the events. Presence is the greatest present we can offer and allows space for important life and faith discussions to take place.

DOUBLE DOWN

Let's be honest; we are all busy and life comes at us faster than we can anticipate. That means we have to double down on our intentionality when it comes to spending time with our children, especially during the school year.

So, before the crazy happens, get some dates in the calendar for regular coffee dates or play dates or just plain our family dates. Consider what are some important Christ lessons and Life lessons you want to focus on for this time in your family's life and make sure you have created the time and space for that to happen.

*God can't be banned
from earth. That battle
was fought and won
thousands of years ago.
He is here to stay. He is
Immanuel. He is God
WITH us!
And that is what we
need to tell our children.*



FAMILY FAITH FORMATION

FAMILY MOVIE NIGHTS

Perhaps you've been looking for a way to help household intentionally engage with one another around faith formation and Scripture this summer; if so, feel free to use the materials below!

FAMILY MOVIE NIGHTS AS DISCIPLESHIP

"When you sit at home..." Dt. 4:7

Here's four faith-forming movie moments to incorporate into your Family Movie Nights

THE BIG STORY

Every movie has an overall plot and many times the plot has something to do with good vs. evil. Of course, we always want good to win and just when it looks like evil has taken the lead, good comes from behind for the BIG win. Does this sound anything like another story you've heard in your life or read in the pages of the Bible? The original good vs. evil story took place in the narrative of Scripture and is repeated in all of the small stories we read over and over again, not the least of which was the resurrection of Christ that we celebrate on Easter.

Some examples of questions you could ask your kids:

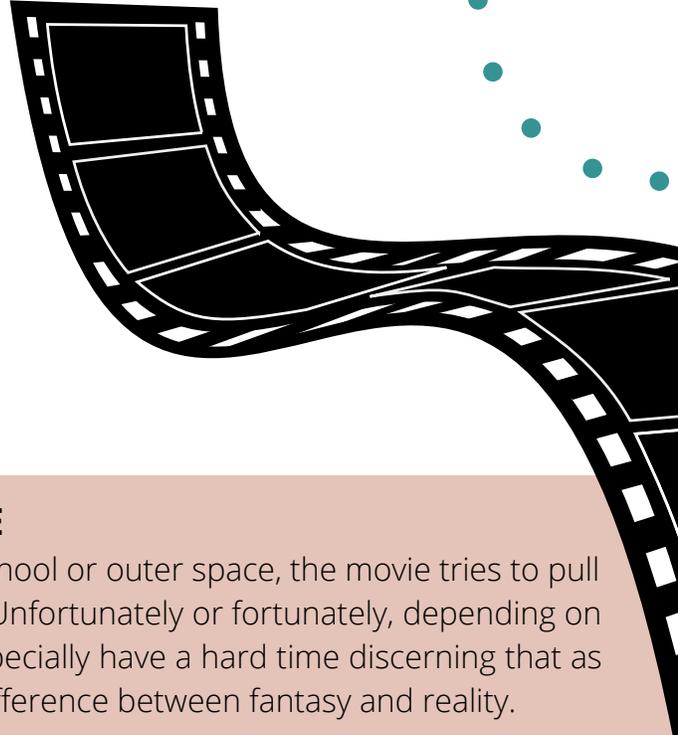
- *Where does the idea of good and evil come from?*
- *Who was the good guy in the movie? Who is the ultimate good guy?*
- *Can you give an example of the Bible where good beat evil, like in the movie?*

THE BIG LESSON

Most movies have a "lesson" or moral they are trying to get across to their audience. It may not be a deep lesson (Dumb and Dumber anyone?) and it may not be a healthy one (50 Shades of Let's Not Go There) but there is some lesson behind the story. Before you watch the movie with your kids, be aware of what the messages are and ask your kids if they can find it or figure it out. I've been amazed by some of the insights my girls have come up with about the messages in movies.

Here are a few questions to help you get started.

- *What is the main message this movie is telling you about life? love? relationships? friendship?*
- *Do you think the message is true or false?*
- *Do you think that is the same message Jesus would give you?*



THE BIG PICTURE

Movies try to paint a certain reality, whether it is set in a high school or outer space, the movie tries to pull you into their alternate universe and have you believe it's real. Unfortunately or fortunately, depending on the movie, the fact is that reality is not real. Sometimes kids especially have a hard time discerning that as their minds are still developing the skills necessary to tell the difference between fantasy and reality.

Here are a few thoughts you might want to share with your kids before and after the movie.

- *Before the movie: Look for things in the movie that are different from your reality.*
- *After the movie: What did you think was unrealistic? Why? How has that been different from your experience? As a Christian, what would you have done in that situation?*

THE BIG HERO

Oh, we love our heroes! My girls recently discovered Indiana Jones and MacGyver (Thank you Daddy and Netflix) and they think these two men are simply amazing. Every good movie has a great hero who always rescues the needy ones, loves the unloved ones, and saves the lost ones. It's as though they had a prototype to work off of (hmmmm), an ultimate Hero that could change the whole world (AHA!). We of course know His name, but let's make sure our kids know Him too.

Here's some ways to start that conversation.

- *Who in the movie needed rescued and who was the hero?*
- *How did we know that he/she was the hero? What makes a hero heroic?*
- *Who is the ultimate Hero of the world? Who has He rescued?*

These questions and conversations flow easily in our house now since we started them a long time ago, but at first it can be a little awkward. **Don't let that awkwardness stop you.** These types of conversations carry more meaning than in just that moment; they begin to help your children build a framework through which they watch television and movies in the future. They will approach these things with a mind that is looking for more, critically reviewing the messages they receive, and developing a worldview based on the reality of God's word.

And to think it all started with some pizza, popcorn, and pop (soda, coke, whatever) in your living room on Family Movie Night.

For a FREE Family Movie Night resource that includes examples of each of these categories, email christina@refocusministry.org as ask for the Ice Age Family Movie Night packet. We are HAPPY to share with you and help you get this party started.

INTERGENERATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



AN ALL-CHURCH BACK TO SCHOOL BLESSING WORSHIP SERVICE

In many places around the country, schools are gearing up to re-start sometime in the next month. For churches that often means a re-boot as well as they move from summer mode into fall programming and the start of a new academic year. Why not use this time to hold a time of commissioning and blessing over these groups as the new school year kicked off and we begin to embrace all of these “new” things?

This intergenerational service experience can be a way for your whole church to come together and let the kids, parents, and volunteers know that they are being held up and prayer and sent out as God’s lights of love as the academic year begins.

Some Key Moments:

- Praying for Kids/Youth
- Praying for Volunteers
- Praying for Parents
- Re-Affirming our Communal Commitment to Discipleship out loud

Feel free to adapt this script to your own church’s service and needs, and blessings to all as we encounter all the “new” things!

“If a person wanted to get to the moon, there was a way; it all depended on whether you knew the directions—exactly which way to go and what to do to get there; it depended on whether you knew the story of how others before you had gone.”

-Leslie Marmon Silko,
Author

AN ALL-CHURCH BACK TO SCHOOL BLESSING WORSHIP SERVICE

Children's Pastor/Family Minister – We are excited to be able to celebrate with you the growth of our kids and families this year and recognize them as they promote to new classes and small groups within this ministry and some to youth group. But before we bring up the kids, can I ask all of our ministry volunteers to please stand and make their way to the center aisle?

(as volunteers are moving)

It is a blessing to serve with this group of people. The love they show our kids and the grace with which they serve is a testimony of the love of Christ in their lives and to the children. So, I'd like to not only say thank you, but briefly pray for you as you serve this upcoming year! Church, will you join me?

(PRAYER – Lord be with and bless these who serve. In their service, give the strength and by your Spirit give them grace. May the love they give be returned to them in greater numbers and may your joy fill their hearts.....

Volunteers if you will please line each side of the center aisle and get your high five hands ready, we will bring in our kids!!

(If you have some fun music, you could use this here. This is based on our structure with small groups. It can be adapted to fit whatever age groups, classes, or sections a church has for their programs. It can also be done as one large group which will reduce the amount of time needed for this commissioning and blessing.. During this part, the children will "run" through the volunteers to the front.

...Joining us for the very first time as they are just starting school, we give you our preschoolers...

...Moving up into the elementary room, we are excited to recognize our new Kindergarten/First Grade small group...

...Not too far ahead of them, we want to recognize our "middle kids" our 2nd/3rd grade small group....

...And finally, our oldest group, and probably the most excited, our 4th/5th grade small group....

...Last, we'd like to recognize our 6th graders who will be moving up to join the youth group this year!

AT THIS POINT, ALL THE KIDS WILL BE UP FRONT AND THE VOLUNTEERS WILL RETURN TO THEIR SEATS

Pastor or Worship Leader: Church, we are so blessed to have this group of children to welcome into worship and help their parents disciple in the faith. At baptism (or dedication, depending on the church), we commit to helping our kids grow in Christ and today we would like to re-affirm that commitment to them in their presence so that they can hear and know that we are here for them.

At this time, we read our church's Congregational Charge read at baptism. More than likely, each church has a similar reading for baptism or dedication. This is a great time to remind the congregation of the commitment they have made to walk with these families and children and a wonderful chance for the children to actually hear the words being said since they are too young to comprehend it the first time is said.

Pastor – Lord, we thank you for the gift of these children and youth. May we be faithful to serve them and may they walk in your love. Be with this as they go into this new school year and give them the grace they need to learn and grow.

Children's Pastor/Family Minister– If you are a parent/caregiver of one of the children here, will you please stand where you are? Kids, these people love you more than you could possibly know and they want you to grow in faith and in love. Will you help me to pray for them like we did for you?

DISMISS KIDS TO PARENTS

Children's Pastor/Family Minister (as kids are going) – Parents we know that the work you do is difficult and while the days are long, the years are short. Please hear this blessing as a prayer for you as you serve God as the faith formers in your home.

"May you love the Lord with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength. May His commandments always be upon your hearts, so that you can impress them on your children. May God give you grace to talk about these things continually, when you're at home, or on the road, when you lie down and when you get up. When your strength fails, may you walk in His. When you are weary, may His arms carry you. And when the day is done, may you hear His voice saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

THE FINAL FOUR

ONE BOOK, ONE VIDEO, ONE WEBSITE, ONE RESOURCE

Spiritual Parenting: An Awakening for Today's Families by Michelle Anthony

Of all the books I've read on parenting, this one has been the most useful in understanding how to incorporate faith into the nitty-gritty everyday moments of life within the home and family. But if you, like me, are looking for "real-life" scenarios, like your teenager throwing party when you are out of town or your son being the only one to stand up and not smoke pot at school or your family living into their faith by serving each other and their community...the regular and real stuff, then this book will be just the encouragement you need.

<https://www.amazon.com/Spiritual-Parenting-Awakening-Todays-Families/dp/1434764478>

Intergenerational Relationships with Dr. Kara Powell

Video by the Fuller Youth Institute

If your church is beginning to move towards creating more space for intergenerational ministry and worship, this interview with Kara Powell, executive director of the Fuller Youth Institute, can be a helpful place to help spark conversation. In it she suggests that fostering intergenerational relationships is the most effective method to support the faith of young people—and invigorate entire congregations. For more resources for a deeply formed spiritual life, visit <http://www.Fuller.edu/Studio>.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIQgPZqRspc>

The Pray For Me Campaign <https://prayformecampaign.com/>

The Pray for Me Campaign is a church-wide initiative that equips adult believers to pray for children and students. It links the generations through prayer and promotes intergenerational ministry. During the campaign, students and families invite believers from multiple generations to pray for one year through the Pray for Me Prayer Guide. There's even a Grandparents Edition that specifically helps grandparents to come alongside their grandchildren and their friends in intentional intercessory prayer. All the information can be found on the website; I've done this three different times and would love to share my own story.

Family Faith Activities Jar Printable Activities

This is a helpful resource to help make all of these discipleship moments possible: Family Faith Activities Jar.

These printable activities help families to gather around faith formation and service in active ways that help children/youth connect faith to action.

Check it out here
<https://www.etsy.com/listing/972365160/family-faith-jar-printable-up-to-100>

refocus

Training and Coaching Opportunities

DUE TO A GENEROUS SCHOLARSHIP FROM THE GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE, ALL COSTS HAVE BEEN REDUCED BY OVER 75% FROM THE ORIGINAL PRICE.

EVERYDAY DISCIPLESHIP

For parents/caregivers who desire to be intentional in the faith formation of their children, this webinar offers practices for daily discipleship at home.

\$50.00/webinar

INCLUDED:

- Unlimited access to all church members
- Personalized for your church
- Resources for the webinar and as follow-up for parents/caregivers

RECONNECT WEBINAR

ReConnect Webinar is designed for pastors and ministers interested in beginning to take steps to connect generations in ongoing spiritual formation and discipleship.

\$80.00/participant

INCLUDED:

- Groups of 4 or more
- 4 One Hour Workshops
- Resources/Handouts for during and after each workshop
- One 1/2 hour personal coaching session following webinar

PASTORAL TEAM COACHING

ReFocus coaching experiences help churches create missional communities focused on generational discipleship and spiritual formation. Through personalized mentorship, trainings, and coaching, ReFocus will help your church move into a deeper experience of community within your church family.

\$200-250 based on church size and needs



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