

Intergenerational Faith Journeys

by Carol Duerksen

MATERIALS AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- Invite people from high school age and up to this session
- Bring snacks for a fellowship time
- Print copies of the sheet at the end with the questions and the short article—one for each person
- Paper and pens

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS:

Welcome participants and play the following ice-breaker games:

- Tell everyone to form small groups based on their birthday. Put January/February together, March/April, etc.
- When the groups are formed, ask participants to share the following in their group: Birth date, age, something interesting or unusual about their birth OR a favorite birthday present or memory.

CONNECT:

Ask participants to share the following in their groups: On a scale of 1-10, how “spiritual” do you feel?

EXPLORE FAITH JOURNEYS:

Hand out the questions to the small groups and ask them to go through them, allowing people to pass if they don't feel comfortable answering, but at the same time encouraging them to share with each other.

Hand out the article “The Dare, the Dent, the Deeper Relationship” to each person, and give them time to read it silently. Then ask the participants to pair up—either within their small groups, or with someone from the larger group. (You will know your participants and what will be best and most effective for them.) Ask the pairs to share and discuss the dares, dents and deeper relationships they have experienced.

APPLY / RESPOND:

Hand out the paper and pens. Ask each person to write down something they learned about faith journeys in general during this time together. What they write should not be specific, like "I found out that Trevor doesn't trust God;" rather, it should be something like "I found out there are other people who struggle with trusting God at times."

Collect the papers and read them to the group. Discuss what they have learned about each other and the faith journey they are all experiencing.

Enjoy food and fellowship together.

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SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

- 1 How did you come to your spiritual beliefs? From church? Family? From events in your life? What has shaped your view of Jesus and God and what “spiritual” actually means?
- 2 What are the basics of what you belief? What do you know for sure? Do those beliefs match with what you hear at church? Why or why not?
- 3 When do you feel the closest to God, and why?
- 4 When do you feel the furthest away from God and why is that?
- 5 What are the benefits of “living spiritually”? What have you experienced personally?

THE DARE, THE DENT, THE DEEPER RELATIONSHIP

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

When I was a camper at Rocky Mountain Camp, some guys dared me to climb with them down Monkey Mountain, a huge cropping of boulders, without the safety of ropes. I was scared spit-less but didn't want to be a wimp, so I joined them.

I sweated and fumbled my way down three-fourths of the boulders to the bottom. Thinking I was almost home free, a large rock, jarred loose from the climber above me, just missed my skull and smashed my right leg. Hot pain seared me as hot tears streaked my face. Shaking with fear, I inched down the last bit, bleeding and weak.

The only place on Monkey Mountain you would find me after that was on level ground at the top. I went there to pray, kneel by the cross at the campfire pit and view the grand mountain range. I peered over the edge and remembered the rock that missed my head by a half inch. To this day, I have a dent in my leg where the rock struck me.

A lot of my earlier faith journey was rocky and risky, just like that dare. Though I was a Christian, I took risks with too much sex, too much alcohol and a flight from solid community into the arms of abusive friends. God allowed me several years of traveling this dangerous path until I realized at a lonely juncture that I was empty-handed and empty-hearted. I had a choice to make: I could continue the emptiness of risk or commit to a deeper relationship with Christ that contained the healing of the cross.

Perhaps you have also gotten a “dent” in your life. Dents come in all sizes and shapes: you get drunk on prom night rather than go to the youth group party and wreck your parent's car. Or, you lose your virginity with your date rather than commit to a wholesome friendship. Perhaps you surf the Web to porn sites and get hooked. Or, you lie to your mom and cause a rift in trust that isn't easily won back.

The bad news about dents is that they often leave forever marks. The good news is that if we choose a relationship with God, those marks don't pain us forever—they can heal and no longer

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cause us to limp. Though the dent in my leg no longer causes me problems, every time it rains, that spot aches a little bit. The twinge reminds me to thank God I no longer have to do dangerous things to find meaning or to be somebody special.

If you find yourself halfway down a slippery slope you don't want to be on any longer, look up to the cross, where Christ is throwing you a rope, inviting you to grab hold.