



Faith in Action

"Nostalgia"

"Do not ask, 'Why are the old days better than these?'" Ecclesiastes 17:10 a

Lesson: Nostalgia – "a wistful or excessively sentimental yearning for return to or of some past period or irrecoverable condition" (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nostalgia>) AKA an enemy of gratitude. This isn't to suggest that our memories are inherently bad. Who amongst us after all can (or would want to) deny those warm and fuzzy feelings of comfort and bliss (and maybe even more than a few hearty laughs too) that only old photos, family heirlooms, keepsakes and yearbooks can bring?!? The problem with walking down Memory Lane isn't so much the journey but rather the way we travel it. It's when we spend all of our time looking backwards with rose-colored glasses and an overly sentimental heart, instead of seeing God's blessings that are all around us, that we start to veer off-course. Just look at the ancient Israelites in today's reading, whose dissatisfaction with their present condition convinced them that hard, enslaved labor in a hostile nation was somehow more desirous (and blessed) than God's grace and provision. See what I mean???

This week, put faith in action by...

Collage Montage

As the Beatles blast-from-the-past, *In My Life*, would remind us, living in the here-and now doesn't mean losing affection for the *people and things that went before*, but rather allowing ourselves to experience love in the hear-and-now as our lives progress. Part and parcel to that evolution is the daily counting of blessings.

This week, set your child on the right path on that lifetime journey (while also repurposing all those old photos stashed in the attic) by creating a Wall of Blessings collage together.

As you choose a photo to add to your family's Wall of Blessings, encourage your child to talk about how that person, place or thing has blessed their lives and how their example has helped them to give thanks to God today.

When your family's Wall of Blessings is finished say a small prayer of thanks together for all of those big blessings God has shared with all of you.

Accentuate the Positive!

Sometimes the best remedy for living in the past is simply opening your eyes in the present to find – and acknowledge – all of God's blessings that are all around us just waiting to be had.

This week, set aside a few minutes each day to help your child discover a moment of God's amazing grace in their lives. Encourage your child to talk about one way they experienced God's grace and/or presence that day and how it feels to be the recipient of such boundless and undeserved love.

And, because gratitude always leads to generosity, share your own moment of God's grace with your child.

Concluding with the small and simple expression of gratitude, *Thanks be to God*, will not only reinforce the need to *give thanks in all circumstances* (1 Thessalonians 5:18), for such blessings and moments of grace, but also provide younger children with a more approachable way to do so.

All Bout Counting

Blessings, of course!!!

Counting your family's blessings can be as easy as reciting your ABC's, at least with this family activity!

This week work with your computer to create a fun past and present Family Blessings chart using each letter of the alphabet for each chart (two charts in all). Hang these charts in a family accessible location and encourage each family member to contribute daily to one or both of the charts by recording something they are grateful for, then and now. (Remember that each blessing must BEGIN with an available letter of the alphabet.)

When the charts are both full of family blessings, share a prayer of thanksgiving with God before your main meal, inviting each family member to include their most blessed blessings from each list during the prayer.

Those Oldies but Goodies

Aren't just on iTunes or jukeboxes! They can also be found tucked within the pages of your Mother or Grandmother's cookbooks!

This week, bless your family by whipping-up a batch of your most savory memory with your child. Use your time in the kitchen together to talk about what makes this recipe so special to you, as well as the importance of *savoring* the here and now.

Reinforce this activity's message by pairing your food memory with a goodie sure to be your child's someday.

Then give thanks to God as a family when you gather together to share the past and the present with your meal.

Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter

Imagine if the yester-you could tell the present you not to spend so much time living in the past, but to put time to a better use by counting your blessings in real-time instead! Then what better time then now!?!

This week, take some downtime with your child to each write a letter to the future you(s). Remember, honesty counts with nostalgia! So be sure to include the bad alongside of the good.

When you've finished, seal your letters, then agree on a date in the future to open them. Corresponding an opening date with a milestone age in your child's life when they (and you) might need to be reminded that God's grace doesn't stop in the past, but travels with us along this journey called life (i.e. 16, 18, 21), is a helpful idea.

You may even want to add a PS to the future you to make a decade habit of this exercise!

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Q: How do you make a hangman really happy?

A: KNOW your Scripture!

So, set aside some time this week with your child to make a hangman *really* happy!

Start by consulting a Concordance (an alphabetical listing of biblical words and topics. Shortened versions can commonly be found at the end of most Bibles) to find scripture verses about gratitude (or whatever you want the topic of the day to be).

No concordance? NO problem! That's what Google searches were made for! There are plenty online to be had. You can also use a search engine to find verses about less common topics, such as looking backwards (plus or minus the grumbling and/or complaining like in today's reading from Exodus 17). Once you've found a few illuminating passages, game on!

Biblical hangman is a fun way to supplement weekly lessons and verses, while also getting your child and you talking about what God's been up to all these years (*and still is!*). (And hopefully add a few years to a hangman's life while you're at it!)