



## **Theme: Connecting the Generations – Telling Our Stories**

### **Warm –Up Activity**

1. Have participants list 3 older adults who have been influential in their lives.
2. Discuss the characteristics associated with these individuals.

### **Scripture**

**Job 12:12** “Wisdom belongs to the aged, and understanding to those who have lived many years.” (NLT)

**Psalms 90:12** “Teach us to make the most of our time so that we may grow in wisdom.” (NLT)

### **Case Study**

Mrs. Allen is a 70 year old former elementary school teacher who retired several years ago to care for her recently deceased husband. Her only daughter, son-in-law, and two grandchildren live in another state and were only able to provide caregiving assistance periodically. Having taught for 45 years, Mrs. Allen desperately misses the daily interaction with her students. Her days are lonely, and she questions her purpose in life. She has recently been contacted by an Acteen in the church who desires to conduct a life interview. The experience is wonderful, and the opportunity to share her life stories stimulates Mrs. Allen to write an autobiography for her family. The life interview is published for the church members to read. Soon, Mrs. Allen is asked to mentor a young woman in the church who desires to teach fourth grade Sunday School. Mrs. Allen is grateful to the Acteens for helping her renew her sense of purpose.

## **The Facts**

According to Susan Bosak, legacy is “an interconnection across time, with a need for those who have come before us and a responsibility to those who come after us.” She describes how young trees grow better when planted among older trees. Roots of the younger trees follow the roots of older trees allowing them to grow to greater depths. By sharing wisdom, older adults feel value and a sense of purpose.

The key to effective intergenerational communication is the telling of stories. Stories connect the young and old; stories help us understand our relationships with others; stories encourage compassion; stories create a sense of wonder; stories give us new perspective; and stories give us the ability to dream of future possibilities. Children need to listen to stories as well as tell their own.

Life stories:

- 1 – encourage interaction and exchange
- 2- promote understanding between generations
- 3- combat the stereotypes of aging
- 4- serve as continuity from past to present
- 5- serve to pass on family tradition
- 6- provide a model to face family life challenges
- 7- enable young and old to learn from each other; enjoy each other; and assist each other
- 8- combat isolation and the sense of loss many feel from growing older
- 9- provide older adults the opportunity to reflect on achievements, disappointments, and resolve conflicts

When a child or teen interviews an older adult, it helps develop interview and relationship skills. Interpersonal communication is a two way street. Older adults should listen to the stories of younger generations to better understand the world in which children live.

## **The Theological Issue**

Currently about one in every eight people (12.4%) of the general population is now considered an older adult. Statistical findings indicate that people who reach age 65 can expect to live an additional 18.2 years. People over 65 years of age will more than double by the year 2030. With aging, many question their past, present, and future purpose in life. Purpose is the driving force that motivates us and gives us the will to live. Without purpose, there is spiritual sadness, loss of dignity, and little meaning in life. (Koenig) At no time is purpose more important than as we become older and face numerous transitions. The church is called to help mature adults discover, celebrate, or renew their purpose to achieve the highest possible level of abundant life Jesus came to offer. (John 10:10)

## **Suggested Activities for Group Study**

- 1- Discuss in what other ways the Church could encourage Mrs. Allen to share her stories?
- 2- A spiritual autobiography is a method by which to describe how one's faith has been shaped on the journey of life. How might the church encourage Mrs. Allen to write her spiritual autobiography?
- 3- Discuss the following prayer entitled "Story Time Again" by Richard L. Morgan

Father of Mercies, it fascinates me that as we grow older, we love to tell our grandchildren stories about when we were growing up. I can hear their laughter as I told them about the parrot who spoke with a British accent, and how once my father broke a window at the church playing baseball. My grandchildren loved those stories because they made me human. But why don't we tell them "growing down" stories. Would they love to hear what it means to grow older, to be more dependent on others, to live as an older person today? Let me tell those stories too.....and help them to understand me better. Amen

- 4- Discuss how the family photo album might be the easiest and quickest place to start to write one's stories?

## **Involvement**

- 1- Individually record your story (write, tape record, home video, etc.)
- 2- Share stories with another individual.
- 3- Share stories as a group.
- 4- Create a spiritual lifeline including historical events, celebrations, and crises. Discuss God's presence in these moments.
- 5- Draw the floor plan of your childhood house. Choose one room with the happiest memories and discuss.
- 6- Visualize your life as a river and write either a narrative or a poem.
- 7- Select a grandparent and write about him/her.
- 8- Describe a dream for life five years from now.
- 9- Summarize your life in 5 sentences. (Richard Morgan)

## **Bibliography**

The Legacy Project [www.tcpnow.com](http://www.tcpnow.com)

Morgan, Richard L. (2002). Remembering your story: creating your spiritual autobiography. Nashville: Upper Room Books.

Morgan, Richard L. (2000). Fire in the soul: a prayer book for later years. Nashville: Upper Room Books.

## Other Resources

Available for download: Questions for Interviewing a Grandparent  
Fill in the Blank Interview  
Interview Tips With Older Adults  
Bibliography of Storybooks to Share With Children  
The Legacy Project [www.tcpnow.com](http://www.tcpnow.com)

Life Stories by Talicor – an intergenerational board game for sharing stories  
[www.talicor.com](http://www.talicor.com)

Self-Discovery Tapestry Kit – an interactive life review instrument  
[www.lifecoursepublishing.com](http://www.lifecoursepublishing.com)

## Books



To Our Children's Children: Preserving Family Histories For Generations to Come by Bob Greene and D. G. Fulford. **ISBN:** 0385467974



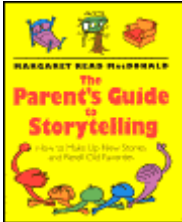
The Book of Myself: A Do It Yourself Autobiography in 201 Questions by Carl Marshall **ISBN:** 0786862505



The Story of A Lifetime: A Keepsake of Personal Memoirs by Stephen Pavuk and Pamela Pavuk **ISBN:** 0970062699



Who We Are: Questions to Celebrate the Family by Bret Nicholaus and Paul Lowrie **ISBN:** 1577311310



The Parent's Guide to Storytelling by Margaret Reed MacDonal **ISBN:** 0874836190



Creating A Family Storytelling Tradition by Robin Moore **ISBN:** 0874835658



How to Build the Grandma Connection by Susan V. Bosak **ISBN:** 1896232035



Something to Remember Me: A Story About Love and Legacies  
By Susan V. Bosak **ISBN:** 1896232027



What's Worth Knowing by Wendy Lustbader **ISBN:** 1585423726



The Story of Personal Storytelling by Jack Maquire  
**ISBN:** 0874779308



Meals and Memories: How to Create Keepsake Cookbooks by Kathy Steligo **ISBN:** 0966979907



Gray Heroes: Elder Tales From Around the World by Jane Yolen  
**ISBN:** 0140276181



SpiritualAutobiography: Discovering and Sharing Your Personal Story by Richard Peace **ISBN:** 1576831108



Memoirs of the Soul: Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography by Nan Phifer **ISBN:** 1582970807