

Chat Matters



Talking Life Together



Let's chat about the stuff that matters

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Talking life together

We can feel overwhelmed with the task of spiritually discipling our children and those children God places in our lives. Too often, we outsource the responsibility and the process of making disciples of our close family. There is hope. This is something we can do!

ChatMatters wants to encourage you in this journey of making disciples in families. To give you a great place to start that is simple, fun and easy to try. Gather your friends and family around the meal table, the BBQ or the coffee table - places where families, households and friends naturally gather. Meals together provide regular opportunities to chat.



Let's chat about the stuff that matters.



Why do we need to chat?

A global ‘rethinking discipleship’ initiative, Here2Stay.org, has discovered through extensive research and conversations with leaders and parents that there are some important principles and foundations that help us all to “stay” on our lifelong faith journey.

The questions on the **ChatMatters** mat have been devised to open up thinking and conversation around the faith formation pillars identified by Here2Stay. Talking life together in this way will help to:

1. Develop deeper and stronger friendships.
2. Learn more about each other.
3. Be inspired and maybe challenged about ways to live lifelong faith everyday.
4. Be personally encouraged that you are doing some great things in your own household with your children.
5. Provide an opportunity to share with others of your own experiences and challenges.
6. To help each other **not** to feel so alone in this journey.
7. To know we can all choose to do something to grow personally and to walk with our children.
8. To learn that “lifelong discipleship” is about being intentional in the everyday moments, we are all called to live this way.
9. To encourage conversations that draws you closer to each other and Jesus.
10. To encourage you to continue the conversations in your own households.



Where to use this mat?



In homes, life groups, play groups, small groups, camps — anywhere. Choose your own group.

1. As a discussion starter with guests round your table.
2. To challenge and motivate friends on the parenting journey together and the faith formation of each person in their family.
3. To reach out to new families and friends to start to build relationships.





Who is this mat for?

1. For all ages to engage in conversation about “lifelong discipleship”
2. There is no minimum or maximum number.

Which mat to use?

Different versions have been produced to cater for different contexts. A version for young families is just one example. Choose the design and format to suit your context.

Download from www.Here2Stay.org





How to use these mats

1. **DOWNLOAD** the version that works best with those who gather around your table.
2. **PRINT** a mat for each person at the table or have one mat in the centre of the table.
3. **LAMINATE** them and use them as placemats during the meal.
4. **BACKCHAT:** On the back of the mat, you can use **OPTIONAL** light-hearted, discussion starters. Roll one dice and answer the corresponding question.
5. **PLAY:** The first person rolls two dice to choose their chat topic.
 - For the number rolled, the ‘roller’ **CHOSES ONE** of the questions to answer.



When finished, the next person repeats the process. Continue to allow everyone to answer a question and listen to each other, answers.

6. **GIVE** the mat **AWAY**: If anyone in the room would like to play this at home with their friends, they can take the mat home.

7. **ENCOURAGE PARENTS** to go to the website to read more about “Here2Stay” and how it might encourage/help them in their parenting and personal faith development.
8. **WHY QUESTION 12?** The statistics show that many people leave their faith or the church, because their questions were not answered. So, number 12 allows the group to delve into further questions that people around the table might like to ask.

OPTION: it may be practical for you to glue your mat onto cork or wood so they last longer.





Here2Stay initiative

If you want to learn more and find ideas to help you in this important task of faith formation for your family, take time to explore the Here2Stay website.

Here2Stay aims to:

- Alert parents and church leaders to the current data about the declining church/faith trend.
- Rediscover biblical emphases that have been overlooked which begin to explain why we are at where we are today.
- Present some suggested building blocks for more effective discipleship for parents and faith communities.
- Empower parents and church leaders to devise and implement their own localized strategies.



Discipling to stay



2 foundations of Here2Stay

"Here2Stay" is focused on helping people grow as disciples of Jesus.

There are two Hebrew words used throughout the Old Testament which are translated as 'family'.

All children belong to some kind of household and wider community. It is these close settings that have the most influence on their development as human beings.

Foundation ONE: BAYITH *(pronounced BAH'-YITH)*

The first, is the word Bayith. This communicates the concept of what we would now call the immediate family – parents and children together under one roof. It is the family household.





Foundation 2: MISHPACHAH
(pronounced MISH-PAW-KHAW)

Mishpachah carries within it the sense of tribe, clan or community; it is in effect a bond of kinship uniting people to a common identity. Deuteronomy 6:5-7 and Deuteronomy 11:18-19, when instructions are given for the passing on of the belief system from one generation to the next, are written in the context of mishpachah.



BAYITH

Families (households) are the primary faith communities for all ages...



The family is the most important group of people mentioned in the Bible. While acknowledging that families come in different shapes

today, Rob Rienow in his book, ***Limited Church: Unlimited Kingdom***, helps to bring the importance of the family back into focus. He writes:

"If you use the Bible, and the Bible alone, the answer would be overwhelmingly clear. God created parents and grandparents to be the primary spiritual trainers of their children at home. God created parents and grandparents to shepherd and disciple the children. This is the divine strategy for the next generation." Rob Rienow, 2013

Why is FAMILY so important in the faith formation process?

- God's design is family.
- God's command is family.
- God's strategy is family (parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents etc).



MISHPACHAH

Discipleship is about being intentional, relational and holistic in creating a culture of lifelong formation across the ages.



"The faith of children is most likely to grow when they have the opportunity to associate with adults who are growing persons who know and love

God. The child's faith is inspired when he or she belongs to an inclusive community that seeks to live out God's love."
Catherine Stonehouse, 1998

We need to ask, "How does God desire us to grow and be transformed?" Here2Stay believes this is through community *across the ages*.

Why are GENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS so important in the faith formation process?

- We are not meant to live in isolated silos.
- A society breaks down when there is no tolerance for people's differences.
- Intergenerational households are increasing.



The 8 formational pillars

Encouraging the broad spectrum of ages to be involved in mission ...



When any person has to give an account of the hope that is within them, this causes their faith to grow deeper. This is true for all ages.

People who are able to give out to others find this helps them to continue to grow in their journey with Jesus.

When all ages can serve in the mission this has benefits on many levels—strengthening the household of faith as well as the spiritual life of each member of the family. Imagine the impact on a person's faith having served on a mission team in a developing country. Travel is not a prerequisite for mission. There are needs everywhere if we look and are prepared to take a risk together.

Why is SERVING IN MISSION so important in the faith formation process?

- Jesus commands us to serve as we are going
- We learn best by doing
- Shared experiences create bonds and deepen relationships

Understanding the BIG STORY of the BIBLE is important in faith formation.



Every part of the Bible – each event, book, character, command, prophecy and psalm – must be understood in the context of one storyline. God's Big

Story has never changed; it was always His plan for us to be a part of it. It is also important to remember that it is HIS story, not ours. We are privileged to play a small role. Sadly, approach to faith formation has been poorly built around disconnected Bible stories and memory verses.

Today we are all looking for the “BIG” story of life and the Bible provides the story. As we enter this story it is important that we discover not only the content, but also that we are a part of this story – God’s story. It is our privilege to help others find their place in God’s big story.

*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.
Ps 119:105 (NIVUK)*

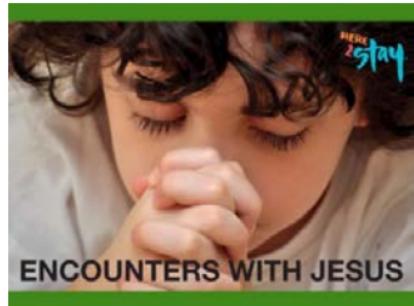
Why is the BIG STORY of the BIBLE is so important in the faith formation process?

- The Bible is one continuing story
- The Bible is one inclusive story
- The Bible is one compelling story



Being intentional about providing spaces to encounter Jesus ...

In an entertainment driven, visually stimulated, “I’m bored” generation there is a tendency to fill our time with lots of activity, noise and busyness so as to maintain attention and hopefully communicate something of value. There is a danger that we fill our spaces so full there is no time for us to hear the voice of God.



Many Christians can remember a time and place where they may have felt particularly close to Jesus – at an event, at a particular time in their life, etc. It is important for us to create the spaces where we can encounter the living Jesus – not just in words from the front of a Church, but in the still small voice of the Spirit of God who desperately wants to communicate with each of us every day.

The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. John 10:3 (NIVUK)

Why are ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS so important in the faith formation process?

- We meet Jesus — who is real
- We meet Jesus — who wants to communicate
- We meet Jesus — who transforms lives



Modelling Jesus' compassion in response to the needs of the world around us.



We are very aware of the brokenness in the world that surrounds us. We all have hopes and fears about the future. There is no age limit to “responding with compassion. How are we engaging with the brokenness and helping our whole family to do the same? The Internet is filled with stories of people today who are changing their community and the world in their own way.

It is time for some fresh thinking, some creative thinking, and some risky thinking about how we can empower each other and our children and give them a voice to be agents of change in our broken world.

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.
Romans 12:15 (NJKV)*

Why is RESPONDING WITH COMPASSION so important in the faith formation process?

- We sit with the heart of Jesus
- We see with the eyes of Jesus
- We serve with the hands of Jesus

We are not meant to travel alone in this life,
true friends are important!

It is true in life that we grow to be like our friends.

Therefore, the more time we spend with our friends the more we will be influenced

by their values and actions. We cannot always choose our children's friends. However, there are some things that parents and mentors can do to influence the choices they make about the friends they choose. Faith communities should be a place where we all receive positive peer influence.

*A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
Ecclesiastes 4:12b (NIVUK)*

With one true friend and God we make a three-stranded cord that is not easily broken. Like the old saying "there is strength in numbers", but it needs to be *positive* strength.

Why is a POSITIVE PEER COMMUNITY so important in the faith formation process?

- "Three strands together are strong"
- A reduction in negative behaviours and an increase in well-being
- We gravitate to people of like-minded passion





A place where God meets you, stretches and inspires you ... and transformation happens.



A peak experience is a vital complement to the regular activities within the faith community. The experience may be a residential camp, a day

camp, a special Saturday program, a concert, a special evening program, and so on. In these contexts, faith is deepened through the mixture of extended time with people of faith, being inspired by new leaders with a vibrant faith, living in community, or the 'wow' factor of a bigger or special event.

A peak experience can also be unplanned; a place where God shows up and something happens that grows and challenges you in your faith journey. A place where God meets you, stretches and inspires you, when He comes close to you and you come close to Him and transformation happens.

Why are PEAK EXPERIENCES so important in the faith formation process?

- They create mountaintop experiences and new perspectives
- They create memories
- They create shared experiences

Take the time to listen, to be encouraging, to be available, to be accepting.

Imagine a new Christian sitting alone reading the story of Samson slaughtering 1000 Philistines with the jaw bone of an ass. What questions would they have? How could they understand this piece of history?

We all need someone to talk with about these stories to help our understanding of God and His character.

In the everyday moments of life, challenges occur. Questions arise every day—small and large—about how life works and why it doesn't work. One of the major reasons why people choose to leave the church is because their questions about life and faith have not been answered. Life is not meant to be journeyed alone but together in community.

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."
Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)

The challenge of mentoring and coaching is that it requires TIME. Time is precious, yet spending time walking with someone else is what we are called to do. It is a great gift for us to give each other.





Why is MENTORING and COACHING so important in the faith formation process?

- ONE significant person in anyone's life makes a difference. We can choose to make that positive and faith affirming.
- Unanswered questions—silence about doubt and difficulty—can drive people away from the church. Engagement in difficult times draws people to the church.
- If we don't walk with them, someone else will influence their journey.



Anticipating, honoring and celebrating our 'transitions' and 'rites of passage'.



Many cultures are rich in significant events to acknowledge the rites of passage of people within their community. In any culture we move through various life stages, each of which brings its opportunities and challenges.

How do we best navigate through each of these—as a household of faith and as a community of faith? What could our family do to be more strategic? How can we create intentional moments, and anchors to fix our eyes on Jesus during each passage? What can families do to celebrate, to learn, and to grow through these times?

Anticipating, honouring and celebrating with each other through 'transitions' using 'rites of passage' is positively powerful. We can be intentional. We can be public. We can create an event or experience that can become an anchor in a person's life. This anchor can become something that helps them to stay on track with God when times are tough.



Why are RITES OF PASSAGE so important in the faith formation process?

- Many young men and women make up their own rites of passage. These rites are frequently less healthy, may produce public humiliation, and tend to lack positive vision about the future.
- There are anchor points throughout the Bible for memory, understanding and acknowledging a greater understanding of God.
- Positive and negative rites of passage anchor us in our culture—they say much to others and ourselves about who we are and where we belong.

Here2Stay.org

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2 stay.

