

Activity 3.5

Family Stories

1 hour

This assignment is based on Chapter 7 of Garland (1999), *Family Ministry*.

Tell a family story (15 min. each) (depending on time, can be done in groups of twos or threes, or the whole group). Just tell all the stories first. Some ideas to get started:

Tell a story about a time you felt God was especially close to your family.

Tell a story that you want to be sure your children know.

Then go back and, using the material in Chapter 7, determine the ways that story functions for your family. Has it changed over time? In what ways does the story involve faith?

What is the relationship of family story-telling to family ministry? How could they be related?

Alternate assignment: Have students write out a family story *that they are willing to share with the class* as an ungraded assignment. Alert them that their story may be read aloud. Refer to the story by Margaret Blackburn in Chapter 7 as an example. The instructor should collect the stories and read through them, screening for any that may be too revealing or otherwise inappropriate. Insert the reading of these stories throughout the remainder of the class as they fit the content. *Note from Diana Garland:* I found this to be a powerful way of illustrating concepts in the class and helping students to learn more about one another. It is important to take a strengths perspective, focusing on the resilience and resources for families rather than taking a diagnostic approach. This activity will help students experience the significance that family stories can have, and the importance of providing opportunity for congregational families to share their stories with one another. The following questions may help guide discussion:

1. What does this story communicate about this family?
2. What principles or theme might be drawn from this story? Is the story more than the theme? In what way?
3. Family stories are "thick" with multiple layers of sometimes contrasting themes that qualify, or point to life paradoxes. Do you hear any of that here?

4. Family stories have different meanings for different family members, and sometimes different meanings at different times. Can you imagine how someone else in this family might tell this story? How it might vary over time?

<http://www3.baylor.edu/CFCM/old/TR/activity03-5.htm>