



# Starting Out

**AN INTERGENERATIONAL  
WORSHIP SERVICE  
for the start of the school year**

## Theme

**Starting out the school year, knowing that God is with us always.**

## Bible Basis

**This service is based on the story of Joshua's last words.  
Joshua 23, 24**

## Notes

### INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

Intergenerational (or all-age) worship takes seriously the idea that people of all ages worship together in the body of Christ. Worshippers — young, old and in-between — can also be involved in

- ◆ planning the worship service
- ◆ preparing for worship
- ◆ inviting people to worship
- ◆ and leading worship.

Carefully planned intergenerational worship incorporates several of the senses, movement, plus elements of surprise, fun and awe.

### CELEBRATION OF A MILESTONE

A milestone in the life of any member of the congregation is significant for all members of the extended church family.

Cultural milestones can also be a good time to connect with people of the community and with inactive members of the congregation.

The start of school is a cultural milestone. It is a huge event in the life of five-year olds and their families. It marks the beginning of a

twelve-year (or more) career as a student.

For many families it marks the end of the period of life when most of the child's life was spent in the home and the parent was responsible for all aspects of the child's life. Now the school and teachers take on part of that responsibility. Children will take more and more responsibility for themselves.

They will learn that the world is bigger than their home and family and that there are lots of ways of doing things and thinking about things — some quite different from what their family does and thinks.

It is a time of excitement and some fear for both the children and their parents.

At this milestone point it is vitally important and powerfully reassuring to know that God loves you and God is with you always — wherever you go. That is the message of *Starting Out*.

In this service the whole church family celebrates the milestone of starting school with children starting school for the first time and their parents.

The service also has a blessing for all school children and their families. The blessing can extend to teachers, school staff and volunteers in schools.

There will be people in the intergenerational mix who are not directly involved in this transition time. It's important that what you do has relevance for them as well.

You might consider an 'adopt-a-kid' approach whereby any adult without a child of their own family is encouraged to sit with and interact with a school child — either one they already associate with or someone they meet for the first time at this service.

## USING THIS DOCUMENT

This document contains

- ◆ **GENERAL NOTES** about the service
- ◆ **OUTLINE** of the service
- ◆ **THE SERVICE** details of what to say and what to do.
- ◆ **EXTRA RESOURCES:** patterns, scripts

Read through all the material. Discuss it with your planning team. You may want to

- ◆ use it as a starting point for developing your own service on this theme
- ◆ choose several parts that will be appropriate in your situation
- ◆ adapt it, or
- ◆ use the service as written.

Even if you choose to use the entire service, there are many options.

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We would love to hear from people who use the *Starting Out*. Please send off a quick email to [rccfm@bigpond.com](mailto:rccfm@bigpond.com) and let us know who you are and how you used the service or ideas from the service.

## INVITATIONS

Invitations to this special event may be distributed as widely as possible. Some suggestions:

- Invite every 5-year old child on your

contact list. You might extend this to every 5–12-year old.

- Invite children and families during any special Christmas celebrations or school holiday events.
- Invite grandparen/great-grandparents to bring their grandchildren — and the children's parents.
- Invite children from your local primary school. You might work with the chaplain to see if invitations can be sent through start-of-school year information packets. Alternatively, you may be able to display a poster or have some printed invitations available where people register children and collect books.
- Contact local playgroups and kindergartens and ask them to give invitations to children who will be starting school this year.

## HOSPITALITY

If you invite children from outside your membership, it is vitally important that you plan carefully how to welcome visitors.

Since children are guests of honour, they should be given special welcome. Consider having a clown dressed as **Handy Man** (see 'highs and lows') to greet the children with 'Gimme five. High. Low.'

The hospitality team may be made up of people from several generations. They may meet prior to the service and work out ways to make children and families feel welcome that are in addition to what you ordinarily do.

They may serve as 'greeters' when people arrive and help people find suitable seating.

Where possible people should sit in family groups. People worshipping alone may be encouraged to sit with a family group.

Families with young children may want to sit near the front or on a central aisle so that the children can more easily see what is happening.

Greeters may also assist people as required during the service.

Hospitality might include a 'cuppa' and nibbles or a sausage sizzle after the service.

## MUSIC

There are five places in *Starting Out* designated as 'Music', suggesting that the whole congregation sing. Music at any of these spots (as well as before or after the

service) may be performed/led by an individual or a group — an existing choir or band, or an intergenerational group organised specifically for this service.

Choose child-friendly music for the service and present it in a child-friendly way.

Try to have a song leader with some 'Wiggles' or 'High Five' flair to encourage children to sing and move to the music.

Use your regular system for displaying words/music — books, service bulletins, OHT, PowerPoint.

## WORSHIP LEADERS

*Starting Out* can be led by one, two, or a number of people.

Try to have as your main worship leader — the one who serves as 'host' or 'compeer' tying together the various elements of the service — someone who can relate well with young children. They will not 'talk down' to the children, but will make it clear that the children are involved and central to all that happens.

The minister/pastor/priest may take this role, or may lead only sections of the service that your church reserves for them.

A number of other people of any age can be involved in leading the service in addition to those already mentioned (hospitality team, music team & worship leaders). Others may

- pray/read prayers
- read the Bible passage
- collect offerings
- give a testimony.

This service also involves a clown: **Handy Man**.

## THE BIBLE STORY

The Old Testament story — Joshua 23,24 — provides the structure of the service.

You'll find a simplified version of this text in *Joshua's Story* in the extra resources at the end of this document.

Show illustrations of the events from Israel's history that are recalled in the story. These could be from a Bible story book. Lego illustrations from [thebricktestament.com](http://thebricktestament.com) are appealing to children and could be shown on PowerPoint.

## SERMON

The suggested sermon for this service is imbedded in the Bible story. See *Joshua's*

*Story* in the extra resources.

The minister/pastor/priest may choose to give a short sermon in addition to this.

## OFFERING

Use your regular format for receiving offerings.

## HIGHS AND LOWS

The concept of 'highs and lows' (good times and bad times) appears at a number of places within the service.

In addition to its use in worship, we introduce a helpful practice for parents to establish in their homes. Every day/night they can talk with their child about their 'highs' and 'lows' — the good things that happen and the bad things that happen.

Highs can be indicated as 'thumbs up' and lows, as 'thumbs down'.

**Handy Man** the clown wears a large foam hand/glove that can be turned to show thumbs up or thumbs down. Alternatively he can carry a poster with a hand picture. **Handy Man** either stands at the side or walks across the front showing 'thumbs up' or 'thumbs down'



whenever highs and lows are discussed.

## MEMORY STONES

An important element of of intergenerational worship is that people of all ages (particularly parents with children) share an experience that they can talk about at home — and that they take home something to remind them of the experience and encourage the conversation.

As part of this service give a Memory Stone/rock to each child. See the page about making memory stones at the end of this document.

Also have a large rock at the front

of the church. You can paint on it the words: 'God says: I am with you always.'

You may build up a sense of anticipation by keeping the rock



hidden — covered with a cloth — until the moment in Joshua's story when it is unveiled.

## **CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION**

Giving people a chance to leave behind old problems and *start out* fresh in the new school year is very much in line with the theme of this service.

Be sensitive as to how you do this, particularly if there are visitors. Use your regular format and alter/simplify the language. Or use the suggested child-friendly format.

## **PRAYER**

People attending this service may be at a critical point in their life as a family. They may want someone to talk with them confidentially or to pray with them.

Plan what you can offer and, at the conclusion of the worship service, let people know what options are available to them and how they can access them.

## **REHEARSAL**

Because this service may be different from your usual worship pattern, and may involve a number of different people, a rehearsal will be necessary.

A complete walk-through will pinpoint any logistical problems, allow the worship leader/s to fine-tune instructions and ensure that the service itself runs smoothly.

The rehearsal time should also include

- prayer for the planning and presentation of the service
- prayer for the worship leaders and those who will worship, particularly those who come in special need of healing
- a reminder that this is worship, not a talent show. People presenting the service are both worshipping for themselves and leading others in worship.

## **HOLY COMMUNION**

In a deliberately intergenerational service, it is not appropriate to exclude part of the congregation (or visitors) from any aspect of the service. If your practice is to exclude children from the sacrament, it may be best not to have communion at this service.

# Starting Out — Service Outline

Use this outline in planning your service. Insert your notes.

OR

Use an outline of your regular order of worship and insert elements from 'Starting Out.

1. ARRIVAL \_\_\_\_\_
2. WELCOME & INVOCATION \_\_\_\_\_
3. MUSIC *praise/start of worship* \_\_\_\_\_
4. HOLIDAY HIGHS AND LOWS \_\_\_\_\_
5. GOSPEL *God is with us* \_\_\_\_\_
6. MUSIC *God is with us* \_\_\_\_\_
7. BIBLE READING/ *Joshua's story* \_\_\_\_\_  
SERMON \_\_\_\_\_
8. MUSIC *As for me and my family* \_\_\_\_\_  
DISTRIBUTION OF STONES \_\_\_\_\_
9. TESTIMONY \_\_\_\_\_
10. CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION \_\_\_\_\_
11. OFFERING \_\_\_\_\_
12. MUSIC *during offering* \_\_\_\_\_
13. SPECIAL BLESSINGS \_\_\_\_\_  
*Starting school* \_\_\_\_\_  
*All students* \_\_\_\_\_
14. HIGHS AND LOWS \_\_\_\_\_
15. PRAYERS \_\_\_\_\_
16. ANNOUNCEMENTS \_\_\_\_\_
17. BLESSING \_\_\_\_\_
18. MUSIC *closing song* \_\_\_\_\_
19. GOING OUT \_\_\_\_\_
20. COMMUNITY TEA OR LUNCH \_\_\_\_\_

# Getting Started — The Service

(Spoken 'script' is in plain type. Comments and instructions are in italic.)

## 1. ARRIVAL

**The hospitality team** greets each person as they arrive: 'Welcome to this special service'.

Have special greeters for young children, eg **Handy Man** the clown or young people.

**The music team/instrumentalists** may play music that will be used in the service.

## 2. WELCOME & INVOCATION

**WORSHIP LEADER:** Good morning.

It's just [number] sleeps 'til a really big day for some of you — the day you start school.

Put your hands up if you will be going to school this week.

It's great that you have chosen to worship here with us at this busy and important time of your life.

You can put your hands down now. I'm glad that those of you who have already been to school remember the 'puttin your hands up' business. If you're just starting out at school, you'll find out about 'putting your hand up'.

**INTERVIEW** You could have an interview with a school age child about putting your hand up in school: How do you do it? When do you do it? What does it mean?

Consider interviewing an older person about putting up their hand when they were in school.

**WORSHIP LEADER:** Welcome to our special *Starting Out* worship service.

When we worship, it's like we are putting our hand up to say [*demonstrate putting your hand up*]: Yes. God is important to me. Yes, I want to hear what God has to tell me. Yes, I want to talk to God.

Sometimes in worship we use a special way of putting our hands up. You can copy what I do. *Demonstrate making the sign of the cross:*

*Hand up:* Yes, God is our heavenly Father who made us, loves us and takes care of us.

*Hand down:* Yes, God's Son, Jesus, came to earth to show us how much God loves us.

*Hand across and back:* Yes, God's Spirit is among us and helps us believe in God.

We have just drawn pictures of a cross like this one. [*Point to a cross in the worship area.*]

**WORSHIP LEADER:** Let's pray to God.

Loving God, help us to know you are here with us as we worship. Amen.

## 3. MUSIC

**The music team** leads the congregation in singing a song appropriate for the start of worship, eg

- 'We come into your presence', #113 *Australian Worship Collection, Vol 1*
- 'Beautiful Lord' #11 *Australian Worship Collection, vol 2*
- 'Lord, I come to you' # 68 *Australian Worship Collection*
- 'This is the day' #18 in *Sing to Jesus*

## 4. HOLIDAY HIGHS AND LOWS

**WL:** During the holidays my family had some really good times, and a few bad times. I'm going to tell you about some of them.

If you think it was a good thing, I'd like you to make a sign like this:



If you think it was a bad thing, I'd like you to make a sign like this:



*Tell a few amusing incidents from your school holiday. Let people evaluate them using the thumb signs.*

**Handy Man** shows the big hand or poster with the *tyumbs up* or *thumbs down*.

*After each story and evaluation, add:*

Yes, that was a real 'high' . . . or That was a real 'low' . . . now here's something else that happened . . .

I wonder if your family had holiday highs and lows too. Please talk to the other people in your family who are here today. Tell about what you think was a real low and something that was a real high.

If there is someone sitting near you who doesn't have a family with them, invite them to hear your stories.

*Allow time for each family to have a brief chat. Invite worshipers who are not part of family groups to join with a family group, or to*

talk about their highs and lows with someone sitting near them or simply to think about their personal highs and lows.

## 5. GOSPEL

**READER** Shows a large Bible with bookmarks at the following passages.

The Bible is the special book God uses to talk to us.

Here's something God says —

**READER:** Opens the Bible to the first passage, shows where they are reading from and reads:

1. (Deuteronomy 3:8) God will always be with you and help you

You may display the words on a screen.

Do the same with the following passages. Alternatively, four different readers can each read one passage.

2. (Joshua 1:5) God said 'I will always be with you and help you'.
3. (Psalm 23:6) God's kindness and love will always be with me.
4. (Psalm 132:1) God is always with his people.
5. (Matthew 28:20) Jesus said 'I will be with you always'.

It sounds to me as if God says the same thing over and over again. God must really want me to know that . . . God is with me always.

God wants you to know that he is with you, too. Say it with me: 'God is with me always.'

'Always' means in the good times [thumbs up] and the bad times [thumbs down].

## 6. MUSIC

**The music team** leads the congregation in singing a song about God being with us all the time, eg

- '24/7/365', Chris Jaensch, from Go, go, go
- 'God will take care of us', #227, Sing to Jesus
- 'Be not afraid, our God is with us', David McGreegor

## 7. JOSHUA'S STORY

**WL:** We're going to look at something else from the Bible now. We can call this part of the Bible 'Joshua's Story'.

**OPTION:** If you know there is a young Joshua in the congregation you may invite Joshua and his family to the front. Then, during Joshua's story, you may interact with this modern Joshua family.

Have seats at the front of the church for Joshua and family.

I wonder if there is anyone here whose name is Joshua.

Joshua, will you and your family please come up here to these special seats as we hear the story of the Bible Joshua.

**READER/S AND WORSHIP LEADER** present Joshua's Story. See the script chart in the extra resources at the end of this document.

The **READER** reads portions of the modified Bible text. The **WORSHIP LEADER** interprets each portion.

Use graphics to provide worshippers — particularly the children — with something to see as well as something to hear. If possible project illustrations of the Bible stories digitally or from overhead transparencies

## 8. MUSIC

The congregation (or a performance group) sings an 'As for me and my family' song, eg Brian Doerksen's 'Today' or a song with the 'God is with us' theme. Consider the children's song 'Jesus be with us' by Rod Boucher (God Gives Book 3). However this service otherwise avoids the possible confusion of naming both 'God' and 'Jesus'.

During the singing, **Handy Man**, the 'Joshua' family or the greeter distribute memory stones to children.

## 9. TESTIMONY (optional)

**A member of the congregation** may have special story about God's presence with them in a high or low time, or about making the decision to worship and obey the Lord.

This might be a child (and family) for whom starting school was a particularly low time or high time.

## 10. CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

Sometimes the lows in our lives happen when we forget to worship and obey God or when we do something that hurts somebody. Can you think of a time when you have hurt someone?



God, who is with us always, wants to help you *start out* the new school year without bad feelings about that.

*Direct people's attention to a cross in the church and/or if children have memory stones with crosses on them, have them look at the cross on their stone.*

The cross is a sign that Jesus was punished for the bad things we do. Because of Jesus, you are forgiven, you can start out fresh.

I reckon that being forgiven is a real 'high' in our lives.



## 11. OFFERING

*Announce and receive the offering in your usual way, OR*

**WL:** We know that God is always with us and takes care of us. We'll say thank you two ways:

- we'll have a money offering to help with the work of helping people that God does through this church
- and we'll sing a song, promising to trust and follow him with our whole lives.

## 12. MUSIC

*While the offering is collected, **the music team** leads the congregation in singing an offering/commitment song, eg*

- 'For all your goodness, Lord, we give you thanks'
- 'I am trusting you, Lord Jesus' #126
- 'God's given me everything', David McGregor

## 13. SPECIAL BLESSINGS

### **BLESSING OF CHILDREN STARTING SCHOOL FOR THE FIRST TIME**

**WL** *invites children who will be starting school for the first time this year to come forward with their parents.*

Boys and girls, this is a very special time in your lives. We want to give you a very special blessing today to make you really sure that God loves you and is with you all the time.

Parents please put your hands on your children's heads as I speak the blessing.

Dear God our loving heavenly Father, be with each of these children as they start school. Calm any fears or anxiousness they may be feeling. Keep them safe, bless them with many friends and good teachers. May

school be exciting, fun and provide them with good learning so that they can grow up to love and serve you and others. Amen.

### **BLESSING OF PARENTS**

Children, please put your hands on your parents as I speak a blessing to them.

Dear God, our loving heavenly Father, as these children head off to school, bless their parents with peace and the certainty that you are always present with their children. Bless each of these parents with wisdom, patience and an abundant measure of love, so that they can continue to parent their children well and pass on the faith that you have given them. Amen.

### OPTIONAL

**WL:** *may send the starting school children and parents to the back of the church where they meet with **Handy Man** for a few minutes while the following blessing for older children takes place.*

*If Handy Man is a silent clown, he may need a whispering helper.*

**Handy Man** *can repeat some of the good things included in the blessing and ask kids to make the 'thumbs up' sign for each one, eg calm any fears . . . keep them safe . . . friends . . . good teachers . . . exciting . . . fun . . . good learning.*

**Handy Man** *may distribute the Highs/Lows Parent letter to families at this time.*

### **EXTENDED BLESSING**

These children are not the only people here today who are going to school. Some are going back for the second, third fourth and even thirteenth year. Will every one who is returning to school this year please stand.

[Optional] That includes teachers and other people who work in schools.

Now will people sitting next to our returning school people place your hand on them as I bless them.

Dear God, our loving heavenly Father, bless each of these students as they return to school this year. Bless their studies, their friendships, and above all their relationship with you. Keep them safe from all danger and assure them of your daily presence. Amen.

[Optional blessing for school staff I ask you to bless the school staff members here today. Through the gift of your Holy Spirit give them a rich measure of love, patience, wisdom, understanding, and energy to teach their students this year. May their students see you

shining through them each day. Amen.

*All families return to their seats.*

## 14. HIGHS AND LOWS AT HOME

**WL:** *Speaks specifically to the parents in the congregation, encouraging them to talk about highs and lows in their families each day. Use the Highs and Lows script and/or distribute the Highs and Lows handout. See extra resource at the end of this document.*

## 15. PRAYERS

**WL** (or a Prayer Leader of a group of Prayer Leaders) leads the congregation in prayers for the congregation, the church, the community and the world.

## 16. ANNOUNCEMENTS

**WL** makes any necessary brief announcements. Include

- *Information about any parenting courses you will be running in the near future*
- *Information about any services/programs you offer for children.*
- *Arrangements for the community tea or lunch that follows the service.*

## 17. BLESSING

*Use the closing blessing of your choice.*

## 18. CLOSING SONG

**The music team** leads the congregation in singing a closing song. Choose a lively song that children can sing or dance to the music.

- *Remember God's love (Good times bad times) David McGregor*
- *'Praise him, praise him all you little children', #46, Sing to Jesus*
- *'You give me shelter', #129 Australian Worship Collection*
- *Let's go out and keep on singing*

## 19. LEAVING

*As people leave, **Handy Man** can shake hands with children as the worship leader greets adults.*

## 20. COMMUNITY TEA OR LUNCH

# Joshua's Story

BIBLE READER	SCREEN	IDEAS FOR COMMENTARY	ACTION
[23:1,2] God let his people live in peace with its neighbors for a long time. Their leader, Joshua, had lived to a ripe old age.	Joshua's story	Our Joshua here hasn't lived to a ripe old age. How are you, Joshua? Can you think of someone who has lived to a ripe old age? People who have lived to a ripe old age have a lot of experience and hopefully — wisdom.	
It was time for God's people to <i>start out</i> on a new stage of their lives.	“	You are <i>starting out</i> on a new stage of your lives in this school year.	
So Joshua called a meeting of the leaders.	“	Joshua had a lot of experience and wisdom to share with his people — and with us.	
[11-13] Joshua told the leaders: Be sure to always love God. Don't ever turn your backs on him.	“	Do you know what it means to turn your back on someone? It's leaving them, not listening to them and not doing what you know they want you to do. When young Joshua goes to school, he won't turn his back on his family. He still loves them and tries to act the way he knows his mum and dad want him to behave. Joshua can also love God and try to do what God wants him to do.	
[14-16] Joshua continued: Deep in your hearts you know that God has kept every promise he ever made to you. When God makes a promise, God does what he has promised.	God says: 'I am with you always.'	God has made lots of promises to you in the Bible. One of the most important ones is 'I am with you always.' And when God makes a promise, God keeps it.	
[24:2] Then Joshua told everyone to listen to this message from God, and to think about the highs and lows they had been through.	“		
Long ago, God said, your ancestors lived on the other side of the Euphrates River, and they worshiped other gods.	Picture of idol worship	Those times when they didn't know the real God was a low time in their lives	
[3] But I brought Abraham across the Euphrates River and led him through the land of Canaan.	Picture Abraham	What kind of times were those? I reckon God bringing them to a good land would have been a high	

I blessed him by giving him Isaac.	Picture Abraham & Isaac		
[4] Then I gave Isaac two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob and his children went to live in Egypt.	Picture Jacob & Esau	Our Joshua's parents will agree that having children and grandchildren is a real high.	
Things got bad in Egypt. Your people became slaves and were treated badly.	Picture Israelites slaves in Egypt	This was a 'low'. But God was still with them.	
[5-6] God said: I sent Moses and his brother Aaron to help your people. I brought your ancestors out of Egypt.	Picture Israelites escaping Egypt	Being rescued was a 'high'.	
But the Egyptians got in their chariots and on their horses and chased your ancestors, catching up with them at the Red Sea.	Picture Egyptians chasing Israelites	Things seemed to be so good. With God rescuing them and all, but that's sounds like another 'low'. God was still with them at this really low time.	
[7] God continued: Your people cried to me for help, so I put a dark cloud between them and the Egyptians. Then I opened up the sea and let your people walk across on dry ground. But when the Egyptians tried to follow, I commanded the sea to swallow them, and they drowned.	Picture Israelites crossing the Red Sea	God really made that low into a 'high' time that the people would never forget. God rescued them and saved them from their enemies.	
[9] God reminded them: You lived in the desert for a long time,	Picture Israelites in desert tents	That was probably a quiet time. No real highs or lows. We have lots of days when the highs are not so very high and the lows are not so very low. And God is with us in those times too.	
[10-11] Then I brought you to Jericho.	Picture of Jericho walls		
You had enemies.	“	Sometimes we have really low times. We may be bothered by enemies — bullies and people who want to hurt us.	
[12] Your enemies ran from you —not because you had swords and bows and arrows. I made your enemies panic and run away.	God says: 'I am with you always.'	But God is with us all the time. And God is much stronger than any enemy or anything we are afraid of	

[13] You didn't have to work for this land — I gave it to you.	God says: 'I am with you always.'	God not only protects us from our enemies, he gives us the good things we need, a safe town, houses to live in and food to eat. He also gives us families — and teachers — who take care of us.	
After God had reminded them of the highs and lows of the past, it was time for the people to <i>start out</i> on their new life.	God says: 'I am with you always.'		
[14] Joshua told the people: Worship God, obey him, and always be faithful.	Worship God, obey him, and always be faithful.	These words sum up all the experience and wisdom of the old man Joshua. They are just as important for us as for the people in Bible time.	
[15] But if you don't want to worship God, then choose right now!	“	Just like Joshua's people, we have a choice.  As families and as individuals we can worship God, obey God and always be faithful to God.  Or we can choose to worship, obey and be faithful to someone or something else.	
Joshua said: As for me and my family, we are going to worship and obey God!	“	Like Joshua, I've made that decision for myself and my family. I've put my hand up for God. As a parent, I am doing everything I can to ensure that my children worship and obey God!	Raise your hand.
[16-17] The people answered Joshua. They said: God has been with us and has helped us wherever we went.  Yes, we will worship and obey God.	Yes, we will worship God, obey him, and always be faithful.	Those people put their hands up for God.  You may like to do the same thing today.  You may put your hands up and read the words with me: 'Yes, we will worship God, obey him, and always be faithful'.	Hands up
[22-24] Joshua said, 'You have heard yourselves say that you will worship and obey God. Isn't that true?	“		
'Yes, it's true,' they answered. We will worship and obey only him.	“		
[26] Joshua set up a large stone under the oak tree at the place of worship in Shechem.	“		Reveal a large a stone
[27] Joshua told the people, 'When you look at this stone, remember everything that God has said to us, and remember your promise to him.'	God says: 'I am with you always.'	Our stone has on it God's special promise to us.  It's important for us to worship and obey God.  It's also important to <i>remember</i> what God has done for us and the promises God has made to us.	

		As we sing the next song, we're going to give a special memory stone to each child who is going to school — to help you remember what God has done for you and what God has promised you.	
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# Memory Stones



Just as the people in Joshua's day had a rock to remember God's commitment to them and their commitment to God, you can give each child a small rock/stone to remember this service and God's promise to be with them always.

You might suggest that the children keep the rock in their lunch box or school bags so they can look at it and touch it whenever they need that reassurance.

You may be able to find nice smooth rocks by a river, but it may be easier to purchase them from a garden supplier. Rocks should be larger than pebbles, but no larger than about ½ the size of a child's palm.

Some options:

- Give plain stones to the children, and ask parents to help their child decorate their memory stone in a way that they will remember that God is always with them.
- Give plain stones to children, and have a work area set up after the service where children can decorate their stones.

Prepare decorated stones to give to the children

- Write the message on each rock with a permanent texta.
- Decopage the rock with an image. Choose one of these or use your own design.
  1. Copy the image onto paper in a size to fit to one side of the rock.
  2. Cut out the image.
  3. Cut slits in the edge of the image so that it will conform to the shape of the rock.
  4. Cover the back of the paper with craft glue.
  5. Apply the paper to the rock. Hold firmly until the glue dries.
  6. Paint over the paper (and beyond the edge of the paper) with a wash of equal parts of craft glue and water.



# Highs & Lows

## THE SECRET FORMULA — A PRESENTATION

**WL:** Holds up a sealed envelope and asks:

Parents, what would you pay for a secret formula that could keep your children communicating openly and honestly with you every night from now on until they finish high school?

Stage a mock auction, **Handy Man** and another bidder planted in the group raise the bidding. **Handy Man** will give the top bid.

Slam a gavel. Sold!

**Handy Man** pulls from the envelope a sheet of paper with the words: Highs & Lows written on it in large letters.

**WL:** We've talk a good bit about 'highs' and 'lows' in our service today.

Sharing highs and lows is a simple technique of asking family members to think back on the day and share the best and worst things that happened to them.

(to **Handy Man**) What happens when you share your highs with another person?

**Handy Man** mimes the concept: A joy that's shared is doubled.

**WL** Interprets the mime, and adds:

When you share your highs, someone knows your joys.

Have you ever watched a comedy show alone and wondered why everyone thought it was so funny? It would have been much more enjoyable and funnier if you had watched it with other people. There's something about sharing joy that multiplies it.

**WL** (to **Handy Man**): What happens when you share your lows with another person?

**Handy Man** mimes the concept: A sorrow that's shared is halved.

**WL** Interprets the mime, and adds:

When you share your lows, someone knows your pain.

Most pain is like a sliver. If you don't deal with it, it will infect your entire system. It hurts to take a sliver out, but the greater hurt happens if you don't deal with it.

**WL:** Highs & Lows is the simple formula worth more than [**Handy Man's** winning bid].

As your child heads off to school, there will be some stress, anxiety and fear. Starting this

simple high and low sharing every night can . . .

(**Handy Man** can number these off on his big hand)

[1] help to keep the lines of communication open

[2] give you a window into their feelings, fears, and needs

[3] help your child find the positive in each day

[4] teach your child to share their feelings even their bad feelings

[5] provide insight into their lives so that you can be a better parent.

**Handy Man** is running out of fingers, but there's more. Talking about highs and lows daily will

[6] teach your child to listen and care

[7] teach your child that parents are human too. They have joys and troubles just like kids.

[8] teach your child a healthy practice that they can take with them the rest of their lives into relationships.

[9] show that you as a family always have time for one another and are there to help

[10] keep your family together in a world that could tear it apart.

Is it worth investing your most valuable currency — your time (an extra five minutes every night) to do this?

**Handy Man** nods enthusiastically then nudges the WL and puts his hands together as in prayer.

**WL** interprets the mime and adds:

You can give your child a gift for life if you take your highs and lows one step further.

Teach your children to take the real issues of their day the best and worst things that happened and talk to God about them.

Teaching them to give their problems to God will help them sleep in peace and know that God loves them and is always with them.

(based on material in *Faith Stepping Stone III*, Faith Incubators)



# Highs & Lows

Dear Parents,

What would you pay for a secret formula that could keep your children communicating openly and honestly with you every night from now on until they finish high school?

Sharing highs and lows is a simple technique of asking family members to think back on the day and share the best and worst things that happened to them.

It won't cost you a million dollars. It won't cost you a single dollar. It will cost the investment of your most precious commodity: five minutes of your time every night.

Think about your own experience, what happens when you share your own joys — the highs of your day — with another person? What happens when you share your own hurts, disappointments, fears — the lows of your day — with another person?

It has been rightly said that a joy that is shared is doubled and a sorrow that is shared is halved.

As your child heads off to school, there will be some stress, anxiety and fear. This is an excellent time to begin a regular nightly practice of sharing highs and lows.

Investing time in sharing highs and lows with your child can pay off with amazing dividends. It can

- [1] help to keep the lines of communication open
- [2] give you a window into their feelings, fears, and needs
- [3] help your child find the positive in each day
- [4] teach your child to share their feelings even their bad feelings
- [5] provide insight into their lives so that you can be a better parent
- [6] teach your child to listen and care
- [7] teach your child that parents have joys and troubles just like kids
- [8] teach your child a healthy practice that they can take with them the rest of their lives
- [9] show that you as a family always have time for one another and are there to help
- [10] keep your family together in a world that could tear it apart.

You can give your child a gift for life if you take your highs and lows one step further.

Teach your children to take the real issues of their day the best and worst things that happened and talk to God about them.

Teaching them to give their problems to God will help them sleep in peace and know that God loves them and is always with them.

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