

## PARENT CONVERSATIONS

How do you share family history with your children?

I consider passing down family history and traditions to children as one of the fun parts of being a parent. Sometimes it can be a struggle, though, to make that engaging or relevant. I've experienced my fair share of eyerolls as I've tried to regale my kids with stories from the past. That's why I appreciate learning more about how other parents incorporate family history into moments with their kids. So step into the worlds of two families who intentionalize these moments and see if you might pick up a trick or two to help you share your family's history.

—Nicole Balza

WE ALL HAVE family traditions, many of which are centered around holidays, when things start to feel nostalgic for the adults and exciting for the kids. I find this is a great time to introduce family history to your children. It's easy to involve them in the traditions and start those conversations.

"Do you want to help Mommy make our special Christmas Day cinnamon rolls? Do you know that my grandma, your great-grandma, would make these cinnamon rolls for me and your aunts every week?" From there, just let the conversation flow.



Children love to hear about what their parents' lives were like when they were kids. Just the other day I blew my nine-year-old's mind when I told her that I didn't have a tablet to play on growing up.

"But, Mom, what did you do for fun?"

She laughed as I told her that my mom, her Nana, would send me to play in the backyard for hours, but sometimes I would sneak books outside and find a shady spot to read.

"Mom, you still love to read outside today!" Yes, I do!

As my girls start learning about historical events in school, it's easy to connect them to family history through these events. This past year, they had a unit on Sept. 11, 2001. They came home that afternoon filled with thoughts: "Did you know?" and "In the video we watched . . ." Here was a chance for me to share my experiences with them: how scary it felt living near an Air Force base and hearing the fighter jets take off hour after hour patrolling the skies, how comforted I felt after the prayer service my church held on the Friday after 9/11. It's easy for anyone, but especially kids, to see historic events as impersonal. By connecting them to my experience, I not only shared a piece of family history but also put a recognizable face to this event, making it more real to them.

Each week my girls have a hymn stanza to recite for memory work. It amazes them how often I know the stanza they are supposed to recite. First stanza of "I Know That My Redeemer Lives"? Got it. Singing the first stanza of "Silent Night, Holy Night" in German? Well, for that we need Dad's help, or maybe "let's call

Grandpa and Grandma because they know German and can help make sure we get the words right!" The more you can involve grandparents in the sharing of memories and storytelling, the more likely your child will see that family history wasn't started by Mom and Dad but was passed on through numerous generations.

I'll never forget the day my oldest daughter first realized that her WELS heritage runs deep. She was about five years old, and we had a mix of my family and my husband's family over for dinner. The familiar words "Let's pray" were said, and we all bowed our heads and broke into "Come, Lord Jesus." After the prayer was done, she looked up beaming and asked, "Does everyone in the world know our prayer?" Well, my girl, everyone in your world knows that prayer, and here's why!



*Susan Willems is the WELS archivist. She and her husband, Dave, are raising two daughters. They are members at Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wisconsin.*



ON NOV. 20, 2020, in an office building in Mapo-gu, Seoul, South Korea, we officially became a family of three. Before beginning our adoption process, we knew little about South Korea, its people, its customs, or its traditions. Throughout the adoption process and beyond, we wanted to be sure that we could learn as much as possible to share with our son, Brooks.

In our family, we celebrate all the typical Christian and US festivals and holidays and have continued to pass down our family's traditions with respect to these. We have also enjoyed learning about and celebrating various South Korean holidays, customs, and traditions. Every year, we celebrate *Chuseok* (the autumn harvest festival) by making various Korean dishes, including foods like *japchae*, *kimchi*, and *bulgogi*. We try to find local restaurants that serve Korean dishes that we can try together as a family.

Brooks' foster parents gifted us several traditional Korean *hanboks*, and we purchased several more that he could grow into. Over the years, Brooks has worn a *hanbok* on holidays such as *Chuseok* or Lunar New Year (pictured). We look forward to these special holidays as a family throughout the year.

We have saved some of his favorite toys from Korea, which often leads to some discussion about what

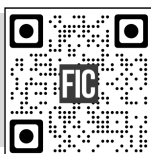
those things are, where they are from, and why they are important to us. Occasionally, we will relive our time in Korea through pictures and tell him about the things we saw and experienced there while we finalized his adoption. We have found several children's books about Korean life and traditions, which he has enjoyed. God also has blessed us with friends we met in Korea with whom we communicate regularly and exchange gifts. Brooks always enjoys the gifts and treats that they send us.



We have always tried to make sure that our son is confident of who he is and that he knows his story. He is a redeemed child of God through Jesus Christ. He is both heir to our family's unique story, lineage, history, and traditions, and simultaneously, by birth and background, he is South Korean. None of these things are mutually exclusive, and no one part of his story or heritage defines him in any way apart from who he is in totality and, most important, who he is in Jesus. All of these things are part of his amazing and unique story and a testament to God's perfect plan of salvation.



*Briana and Chris Lambrecht, along with their son, Brooks, are members at Christ the Lord, Brookfield, Wisconsin.*



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