

Dad's Treasure Box

Save childhood memories before they fade away
by John Trent, Ph.D.

There's a scene in Raiders of the Lost Ark where the evil villain, Belloq, holds up a pocket watch. He explains to Indiana Jones that the watch has little worth. But he adds, "Bury this in the sand for a thousand years, and it becomes priceless."

His point is that over time, even the most insignificant thing can take on great value. And that is certainly true when it comes to all the notes, drawings, and little trinkets our children give us over the years.

That's why I've made a conscious effort to become a "positive packrat." Now I know that the idea of hanging on to a torn out page of a coloring book or a clay "horse" that looks nothing like a horse goes against the grain for you dads who like to toss any unnecessary piece of paper. But this isn't an issue of neatness or organization. Hanging on to the program from your son's preschool graduation or that Father's Day card your daughter scribbled her name on can be a simple and wonderful way to bless your children.

If you're a really organized guy, you can purchase a file folder with clear plastic envelopes and use it to store those drawings and love notes from your children. You can type labels to identify the occasion and even include a few notes about what happened to spark your memory in the years to come.

Now I'm not that guy, so instead, I bought two nice storage boxes, one for each of our two girls. Whenever I have something I want to keep, I just toss it in one of these boxes. That's where I keep the piano recital program with Kari's name misspelled and the ticket stubs from the ice show we went to when the girls were little. These items have no value in themselves, but they remind me of moments with my daughters that I never want to forget.

But this box isn't just for me. It seems like our daughters have grown up in a heartbeat. Right now my oldest is deciding on a college to attend. And before she leaves home, we'll open up her box for a priceless walk down memory lane. Doing so will be fun for us, but it will also let her know that we have enjoyed the little moments of her life as much as the big events. Knowing that we've saved some of her drawings and notes will tell her how much we treasure her and the place she holds in our hearts.

Still not convinced that keeping track of handmade treasures is a great way to bless your kids life—and your own? Dad, did you know that over 160 times in God's Word, we're asked—often commanded—to remember? In Deuteronomy 32:7, we're encouraged to "Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you."

God is faithful in our lives and in the lives of our children. Holding on to those tangible pieces of childhood is a beautiful way to celebrate God's goodness and remember his faithfulness.

Maybe one of these days I'll take the time to get these two memory boxes organized, with every card and item cataloged and color coded. (My wife would tell you there's a better chance of my being hit by space junk.) Yet carefully organized or tossed in a box, those notes and accomplishments and treasures created by little hands can provide an amazing connection point for you and your kids. It's a great way to "remember" and a great way for you to tell your children what treasures they really are.

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