

What Makes Your Kids Enjoy 1 Church Over Another?

Recently my family and I went on a Disney Cruise.

The cruise was a gift from my grandmother when she passed away 10 years ago. Cruises were one of her favorite ways to vacation and she wanted to make sure each of her grandkids experienced one, as well. At the time that she passed, our family was so young we opted to wait until they were older to take the epic trip.

So, January 2013 was the year to experience a cruise. A Disney cruise, no less.

Short of winning the lottery, I never would have considered trying to save money to go on a Disney cruise. Now, after experiencing one, it's all I can do to scrimp, save, beg, borrow and steal to go again. Some way the McClain clan will ride the waves of another Disney ship. It was that good.

There are so many great things I could share about the experience. But my biggest takeaway from this trip is the value Disney places on relationships. I didn't comprehend it until I experienced it.

I've always viewed services as something to be done with excellence and efficiency. Wait staff and cleaning crews in particular. These areas of service should be almost invisible in their presence yet impeccable in their craft.

Unseen

Unheard

Yet obviously at work.

I experienced something completely new on this cruise.

We had a stateroom attendant that took care of our room. She came in every morning and made beds, moved furniture into place and cleaned our bathrooms. She returned every evening to set up the beds and prep the rooms for sleep. She left little gifts every time she came. Chocolates. Finger sandwiches. Mini-cakes. Towel animals.

I expected to have my room prepped by an attendant.

I didn't expect our family to fall in love with her.

But we did.

Narissa is incredible. A native Jamaican, she shared about her teenage kids and husband living in Jamaica. She talked of her love of country music and how she dreams of visiting Tennessee. She loved on my kids, left them special treats, always asked about their activities and showed genuine interest in them. She patiently listened as they blurted out stories and silly jokes.

Narissa is a beautiful woman who loves what she does, and it was evident every time we saw her. She does more than just clean staterooms. She cares for families. She helps create an unforgettable experience that embeds itself into the hearts and minds of those in her care.

I hope to see Narissa again. In fact, if she came to Tennessee, I would invite her into my home, leave chocolates on her pillow and attempt to make towel animals for her.

The shift is striking simply because what I experienced exceeded my expectations.

I expected to have a great cruise. I expected to have a clean stateroom.

I didn't expect to make a new friend.

The experience reminds me of the importance of relationships.

Relationships enhance an experience beyond expectations. They add an enriching aspect to an event. In kids ministry, I can host a ton of great events, including the weekend services. But if I want to make them greater, richer, more enticing, there must be a relational connection. There must be some aspect that connects people emotionally.

As we continue to strive toward a relational model in FPKids, I'm convinced more than ever that kids and adults want to be known. And the best way to know someone is to be consistently present in their lives. Orange calls that "Showing Up Predictably."

We don't have to come with all the answers, or all the right questions, or all the right reactions. We just need to come, to show up every week and to show up predictably.

In so doing, we get to know the kids God brings to us. We learn more about them. We open the door to listen to their silly jokes and blurt out their crazy stories. And in all of that, we touch them deeply. We become a trusted friend. We become the reason they want to come back.

I have this crazy dream.

That kids will walk away from church feeling as if they matter, as if they're important, as if God has a plan for their life, and if they come back over time, they will hear more about that plan from someone who believes it too.

A volunteer who simply wants to do something important with his time can decide to serve in kids ministry.

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