

Why this moment matters

By Nicole Miller

Several senior girls were lamenting how many days of school were still left until they graduated. They were just ready to be done and move on. As they talked, I mentally teleported to my first small group time with them, when they were new tenth graders.

We had spent three years together. They couldn't wait to move on, but I was nostalgic for the days gone by. I also recalled my own days as a senior in high school, nearly 14 years before. I felt compelled to tell them what I had needed to hear then.

I am sure it had been told to me, too: "Slow down. This is the only chance you have to be a senior. High school is such a short period of time. Enjoy your friendships, enjoy your clubs and sports, in fact, enjoy your teachers. Don't rush it!"

I know they heard me, but I'm not sure they listened, just like I didn't at that age. The concept, though, applies to each age, whether it be 5, 18 or 33. We only get once chance to be that age, to live in that stage of life and to live it fully. As you look at your life and the lives of those you impact, how often do you think of the moment as fleeting and momentary? Do you take the opportunity to grasp it?

A few years ago I was required to take a class that I thought was irrelevant, "Lifespan Development." We looked at how God designed us with specific developmental needs and abilities at the various stages of our lives. I knew this information. I had studied this time and time again. As I wrestled with this concept in terms of those with whom I was currently doing ministry, however, the reality came alive.

The two-year-old's I worked with at the daycare would only be 2 this year. The way I loved on them, rewarded or punished them, spoke to them, and nurtured them would help them to form their view of God. The ways in which I treated them and spoke to them would lay the foundations for their belief about God and about themselves.

The third graders I met with on Thursday afternoons would only be 9 this one time. If I didn't communicate to them who God is, how much He loves them and what His nature is, then their idea of Him could be set without ever knowing the truth.

What if I sat with the senior girls and only spoke truth at them without letting them engage with the information, and share their thoughts and questions. If I didn't help them wrestle with the truths of Scripture and how it applied to their lives, they could walk away with many facts but never be changed inside.



If I keep in mind how fleeting the moments are with the children and adults I work with, perhaps I will take my influence in their lives a bit more seriously. Knowing it is the only time that we will share this time in their life together should move me to make the most of those moments. Intentionality goes a long way in doing this. If I intentionally enter their life and their stories, I will more than likely have a greater impact. Part of this involves asking personal questions and getting to know them on a deeper level. Another aspect of this, though, is knowing how God designed them to be and think at this specific moment.

As we minister, we encounter each person at a specific life stage. If we do not know the needs and milestones that are unique to that age group, we may be developing a shaky foundation. Take a look at the following information to see some primary needs and values of each stage of the lifespan and how you can best minister during that stage.