

# How to Use the Journal for Max Effect

Gifts are powerful. Proverbs 19:6 says, “... everyone is the friend of a person who gives gifts!” In fact, every good gift comes from the Father (James 1:17). Gifts create relationship. They build bridges and they can even restore broken friendships. Of course the most powerful example of this is Jesus Christ himself: “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.— John 3:16 (NLT).

## Why We Give Our Participants a Gift

One of my favorite characteristics about our God is his generosity. He’s continually giving us amazing things. From incredible sunrises, to setting us in families, to healing our hurts—even his name is Provider! (See Genesis 22:12-14.) We want to reflect God’s generous nature, so we give our participants a gift. Even before there was a Network, we gave tee shirts and photocopies of devotional packets to the kids. As we grew in size and skill, those simple photocopied sheets turned into the Mission Adventures Journal you have today.

## The Dupont Story

Sometimes though, gifts can be taken for granted. Sometimes we don’t understand the significance of what we’ve been given. A story is told, (that I’m sure I’ve got the details wrong), about a certain chemical company that had a really great year. To celebrate, the executives decided to give everyone in the company a surprise bonus at the end of the year. As they made the decision, they looked forward to hearing the stories their employees would tell them about how this gift was a blessing to them. To their surprise, the executives got very little feedback from their employees.

The next year was also a good one—not as good as the first year, but pretty good nonetheless. The executives again decided to give their employees an end-of-the-year bonus. This time the amount was about half of what it was the previous year, and this time the executives made a point to thank everyone for their hard work and let them know the bonus would be coming at the end of the year. In the back of their minds, they wondered if they would hear complaints because the

bonus was smaller this time. Again the executives were surprised. Employee after employee went out of their way to express their appreciation. They got thank you cards. Employees stopped them in the halls and shook their hands and told them about how they used the bonus to bless their families. Even though the gift was smaller, it was more effective. It created a response of gratitude in the hearts of those that received it. Can you imagine how satisfying it felt to be one of those executives?

## Understanding a Gift’s True Value Can Transform Us

Sometimes we don’t understand the true value of the gift we receive. Sometimes a gift can be so much more meaningful if we understand what it is, and why it’s important. Recently, I saw a friend of mine receive a bracelet from her grandmother. She knew that this bracelet had intrinsic value, but she didn’t realize how important the gift was until her grandmother told her the story of this piece of jewelry, and what it meant to her family. I have no idea of the actual value of the precious metal

# How to Use the Journal for Max Effect Continued...

and stones in that bracelet—certainly it is valuable in that way. But whatever that amount is, it pales in comparison to the understanding of what that jewelry means to Grandma and what an honor it is for my friend to receive it. If she would have only received the bracelet, I'm sure she would appreciate that gift—but since she also received the story behind it, and understood how personal this gift was, the bracelet means so much more.

Likewise, when we understand the Gospel, and we receive God's amaaaaazzzinngg gift of salvation, we do more than appreciate it. We embrace it, we let it change our lives because of that gift's personal cost to the giver. This incredible gift of salvation loses its intense power if people don't know about it. They don't appreciate it, they don't embrace it or let it change their lives. In the same way, if your students don't understand the journal they've just received, the intensity of its power to change their lives is greatly diminished.

## Three Keys for Making the Most Impact With Your Gift

However, when your kids know about the journal and understand all the cool features it has and what a treasure it

can become, the more likely they are to embrace it, use it, write it in it, and let it change their lives. Here's how you can increase the effectiveness of your journal:

When the kids arrive give it to them in a special way. Maybe you'll pack it in that little bag with the tee shirt. Or maybe you'll set it on their beds with a little note saying, "Bring this with you to the next session." Maybe you'll go crazy and wrap it up like a little present.

In one of your first meetings, go over the Journal with the kids. Page through it with them, describe the features it has. Show them the devotional pages, and how they can use this during the quiet time you've included in the schedule.

Cast a vision for what this can become. Help them imagine that once they fill it with their thoughts, their doodles, their notes, that it's transformed into a personal treasure that they can keep forever.

A seemingly simple thing like our spiffy Mission Adventures Journal may actually be more powerful than you think! Don't despise the power of this small gift.

*"The best gifts to receive are the ones that the giver really cared about, really invested in giving. That's why Jesus is the best gift of all."*