

Go ahead...

SPEND, SPEND, SPEND!

By Jeb Egbert

In times of great economic challenge, most people's behaviour changes. They tend to pull back and be more conservative.

I'd like to challenge you to consider spending *more* during this crisis. Not more money, though. More time.

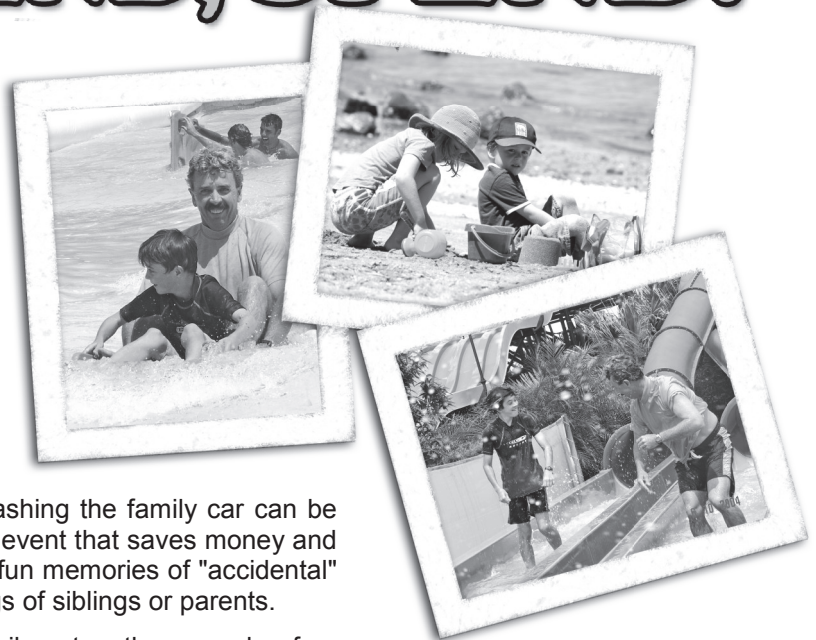
More time with your spouse, children or grandchildren.

It's interesting that when people believe they have *more* financial resources, many of the things they do can actually diminish the simplicity of time spent together. We rent movies or purchase the latest gadgets. Even going to amusement parks or to the movies not only costs money, but often does not result in additional quality time together.

But when we need to cut back for financial reasons, doors can open to more thoughtful time together. For instance, making a priority of playing board games not only doesn't cost much, but it binds the family together. It might help to create a tradition that will be remembered for years to come.

There are so many things that can get in the way of spending time together as a family. Parents have to be intentional about using what time is available.

My wife shared with me the story of a single mother with three pre-adolescents who had "restaurant night." Instead of going out, they took turns in pairs serving each other. Those being served got dressed up as if they were at a fine restaurant while the other two brought menus, took orders and served the meal.



Even washing the family car can be a family event that saves money and creates fun memories of "accidental" sprayings of siblings or parents.

Riding bikes together can be fun, inexpensive and provide exercise. And what about having an occasional picnic at the local park when the weather allows? One family I know made a goal of eventually visiting all the parks in their community.

My wife introduced a silly tradition that has since become a family staple. Marshmallow fight! It all began after a meal when we were settling down to enjoy some roasted marshmallows in front of the family fireplace when suddenly my wife let fly with a marshmallow that hit my teenage son right in the stomach. With that, the fight was on! All three of our children were adolescents at the time and we had a terrific time over the next 20 minutes, pelting each other and weaving and ducking as the torrent of marshmallows flew across the room. We also found marshmallows over the next few weeks in the drapes, behind chairs or in the planters.

Another favourite activity is doing word games at meal time. The idea is to get as creative as possible with names of countries. Some are eminently predictable: "Hey mum, I'm 'Hungary.'" "Okay then, let's have some 'Turkey.'" "But I'd prefer 'Chile.'" And so it goes until it morphs into the more outrageous. "Yugoslavia" is embedded in a

sentence to mean "you're a slob—ia." Perhaps the most fun is watching family members become quiet as they are trying to think up the next silly sentence.

Sometimes that game shifts to making up silly names. My daughter will ask during dinner, "Hey dad. Have you met my friend Rick?" "No," I reply. "Oh," she says. "His last name is O'Shay. Rick O'Shay." That is followed by "Phil Erup," and "Larry N. Gitis."

An idea that used to be fashionable was having a barbecue and making homemade ice cream. Chances are, grandparents still know how to do that and can enlist the help of their grandchildren to do some of the work on this fun project.

The point is that there are so many things that can get in the way of spending time together as a family. Parents have to be intentional about using what time is available. While financial resources may be shrinking, our allotment of time remains.

So go ahead. Spend, spend, spend! Spend as much time as you can with your family. Make it fun. Build traditions and memories that will last a lifetime!