

Our Trip Takes Us

By Becky Hirn

The dozens of board games we have at our house in Delphos are all crammed into this freestanding cupboard in the living room. Opening one door could mean a spray of Go Fish cards. Or one move and the precariously stacked poker chip tower may collapse. And taking out a game is like a round of Jenga, be careful. We liked our cabinet though. It held all our favorites, Apples to Apples, Scrabble, and Mousetrap. It also held an idea. That was the idea that we would have time for Family Game Night. Sometimes we did. Most nights we didn't.

I started thinking about our old game cabinet while getting a board game out for the kids a couple weeks ago. Thankfully, our game organization skills have improved. They had to. Right now, in our RV, the games are stored in one of those reusable shopping bags behind my seat. There are exactly five boxes. Some of the boxes do double duty. One game, a gift from my aunt, boasts more than 50 games and activities. The great thing is we go to that little bag of games a lot more than we did our old cabinet.

I guess there are reasons for this. We spend every day together. With limited access to electricity and no access to TV, Family Game Night is now achievable. Lately, we've been playing Backgammon, Bingo and Checkers, the classics. We even taught the kids to play Euchre a few months back. My uncle in Texas loved the idea of our 5-year-old outbidding him.

Recently, I watched a game of Checkers between Carter and Abby. As I watched, I thought, there's no better way to learn life's cruel lessons, than sitting across the table from a sibling with a board game between them. The kid's game went something like this:

"You are so trapped, Mister."

"Oh no I'm not...wait."

Then negotiations.

"Abby, will you let me go this one time? I won't jump you next time."

"Oh, all right."

But it was all just an elaborate set up for a double jump ambush.

"Mommm!"

I just smiled remembering being on both sides of that same scenario with my own brothers during summer vacation or after school. We made the deals, alliances and sneaky promises when we played our own board games. We also had a game cabinet packed with Milton Bradley and Parker Brother favorites. Sometimes, we'd play Monopoly. It was kind of a time commitment to a kid. What usually ended up happening was the child who got Park Place ended up providing "assistance" to the other child just to keep him in the game. Besides learning about buying and selling property and fighting over who gets to be the banker, I guess we also learned about helping out your neighbor. That was all before

Xbox, Playstation and handheld electronics. I doubt they've perfected a computer game that can provoke a child like the neighbor kid or one that can challenge a child like when their little brother is beating them.

On our trip I'm glad we've made the time for board games. We've been busy this year with National Parks and museums and cities and campgrounds and meeting other people. But there's something important about playing games. We learn about each other and how to win and lose. It really doesn't take much to pull a game out of the bag. And just like in many other areas of our new traveling lives, we're getting by on less and somehow finding a way to fit in more.

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