



Reaching the Next Generation

Matthew 18: 1-6; 19:4-15

- This week and next we are focused on gearing up for VBS. I will be preaching on part of the theme for VBS next week. We also have our student ministry going to camp this week. This Sunday I will be preaching on the importance of reaching the next generation for Christ.
- VBS is one of my favorite weeks of the year.
 - How many of you were saved during Vacation Bible School?
 - How many would go back and say that VBS was a formational part of your spiritual growth as a child?
 - How many of you have seen God do amazing things in the lives of kids during VBS?

- *How many of you are going to volunteer for VBS this year?*
- We talk a lot about generations in the church. The church should be multigenerational. It is a healthy sign to see young and old worshipping the Lord together. **Titus 2** clearly explains the spiritual fruit that comes from that in a discipleship context.
- Every generation matters. God invites us all to His table to take part. I am reminded of that when we celebrate the Lord's Supper.
 - There is a difference between older and younger generations. We are to, of course, honor the older generations. But the difference of approach that the church must have concerning the younger generation is this – if they are not reached for the cause of Christ, the faith will not be passed down from one generation to the next.

Main Point: **What does it take to reach the next generation for the cause of Christ?**

- Each generation has unique qualities. Some good. Some not so good. A while back, Jac referred to the 1990s and the late 1900s. Each generation may seem so different that it almost feels foreign to them.
- Some think you have to change everything about who you are to reach them. Dress differently. Talk differently. Act differently. I think if anything, ***younger generations are looking for authenticity first, especially in the church.***

I. The humility of a child

- a. This is what Jesus says is required for someone to be saved. This is a radical statement for His day because children were not looked at with high esteem. They couldn't work and produce like adults could.

- b. In this scene you could see that the children were mostly seen as a distraction.
- c. In the context of this story, the disciples are asking Jesus who is going to be the greatest in heaven.
- d. What a human question to ask. We can be so full of self and so full of pride that we could find ourselves asking questions like that.
- e. The Gospel of Jesus teaches us that the first will be last and the last will be first. That in order to be lifted up in eternity, you will need to be humbled on earth.
- f. What in the world do we know about humility today?
 - i. Is humility a virtue that anyone would jump to celebrate in our society. Do we have moments where parents attempt to instill humility in their children, pointing them to the Biblical importance of humility. Are we prone to live humbly in a world full of material prosperity and every commercial good known to man?
- g. Here's what I know – you can give a kid a brand-new gaming console and they will play with it. But you can also go to an impoverished country and give a kid a soccer ball, and they will be so thankful and full of joy.
- h. Adults – maybe we need to rid ourselves of ourselves. Maybe we need to think about the bigger picture. What is the church going to look like after we are all gone? How are we going to pass on the faith once and for all delivered to the saints? What can we do to humble ourselves in reaching the next generation?

II. Empathy of others

a. VERSE 6

- b. Jesus takes the spiritual formation of children in the faith seriously. This is concerning those who are young in the faith. Those that believe in Him.
- c. It would be better for them to drown than cause a young Christian to stumble.
- d. How important it is to consider our younger brothers and sisters in the faith. To ensure their spiritual health and growth. To make sure they are growing up in a spiritually nurturing environment.
- e. I believe there are those who have been hurt by people in the church, and they should probably understand that the church is made up of messy people. It will not be a perfect experience in any church.
- f. However, we in the church should also do everything we can to be empathetic of the spiritual growth of our young ones.
- g. Generation Z is the least evangelized generation in American History. Priority number 1 is reaching them for the cause of Christ.
 - i. If there is a high schooler that comes in church on a Wednesday night, the first thing out of my mouth will not be anything about the hat. It will be “I am so glad you’re here.” We can talk about the hat later. First, let’s talk about Jesus.
- h. Empathizing with others is understanding where they are and what exactly they need.

III. Pursuing God's plan

- a. This is an interesting passage to me – in between two stories about little children there is the heavy topic of divorce and church discipline.

- b. Of course, this is purposeful. I think this is driving home the idea to us that these issues have weightiness to them.
- c. These are not side issues that we can skirt around. There are consequences to how we navigate these issues.
- d. Ultimately, it comes down to this – are we going to pursue God’s plan in how we organize our church, how we organize our family, and how we reach the next generation?
 - i. With the church – membership has meant very little to people in our modern day. We are moving away from that model as a church, and we are embracing a meaningful membership model. We are not completely there yet. But we want being a member to mean something. It is a covenant community. Following God’s design for this community helps to ensure to proclamation of the Gospel from one generation to the church.
 - ii. With the family – we see the devastating effects of not following God’s design here. Marriage matters. Mom and Dad matter. Gender roles matter. One of the most annoying things on earth that we see time and time again in our culture – Dad is made out to look like this incompetent loser who just sits at home watching TV and drinking beer. He is the subject of jokes about finances, raising children, and working.
 - 1. I just believe there are some Christian men out there who are doing what God has called them to do day in and day out. They are competent and they faithfully lead their families to the Lord. They love the children and their wives. They are intelligent and strong.

They protect and defend and provide for their families. Praise God for godly men.

2. The United States Senate just voted to enforce the draft for women in our country. There needs to be some godly men who will rise up and say, “Over my dead body will my daughter be forced to fight in a war.”

IV. Time and intentionality

- a. The Kingdom belongs to children such as these.
- b. Jesus was willing to spend time with them. You know what your kids or your grandkids want more than a gift on Christmas – your time.
- c. I don’t remember a single gift I ever received from my PawPaw Cottonbud on Christmas. But I remember the hours he spent with me telling me story after story. Teaching me things that are still with me today.
- d. What a beautiful legacy it would be for a child to grow up and be able to say their parents or their grandparents took the time to tell them about Jesus.