

A Vision for the Next-Generation

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Good Morning Christ Community! Can we show our appreciation to the students who were able to help us in worship and greeting this morning! That was awesome and it is truly great to see them up there leading. Jeff doesn't know this yet, but my hope is to have them help lead quarterly or at least more frequent throughout the year, so now Jeff knows that...

But today will be a little different than normal, this is a vision Sunday with a vision-sermon; the main emphasis will be on the nextgen and family ministry here at CCC! But before too many of you check-out, because you don't have kids or your kids are grown and out of the house and you are loving life as an empty nester or grandparent, don't! Don't check out. A vision for family ministry, as I elaborated on last year, includes all of us which we will collectively come to see!

If you have your Bibles please open them up to the book of 2 Timothy. Today's message will begin in 2 Timothy and end elsewhere, but I want to give you some of the key components of the ministry from God's word. I want you to see how what we are doing is faithfully modeled for us by others. And I want you to be excited about what God is going to do in the next-generation at Christ Community. This is the big-picture vision today, with the details to be fleshed out in the months to come. (Background)

2 Timothy 3:10-15

10 You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, **11** my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. **12** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, **13** while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. **14** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it **15** and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

This morning we will have three truths from the text that will correspond to the three pillars of the Nextgen ministry. These will be guiding what we teach and practice in the years to come and so I want to expound on them for you this morning. But real quick I want you to see our vision and mission statement for the ministry:

Vision Statement: The Nextgen Ministry of CCC exists to glorify God by intentionally cultivating hearts of worship in children and students through the teaching of the Good News of Jesus Christ. (Christo-centric focus, see Jesus as supreme)

Mission: The Nextgen Ministry of CCC seeks to partner with parents to disciple the next generation of faithful Christ-followers.

The first truth I want to highlight for us is:

1) The Power of the Gospel (v. 14 and 15)

We will see the power of the Gospel, and understand that the first pillar of the nextgen ministry is the Gospel. And with the Gospel I am not only talking about the good news of what Jesus has done, but teaching the Scriptures in such a way that we see how everything points to and culminates in Jesus!

Paul calls for Timothy to continue on in what he has been taught and believed, and reminds him how from childhood he has been acquainted with the Sacred Writings. How from childhood he has been taught God's word, it's been faithfully taught and explained to him by his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois. They, as his family, have been explaining to him the things of God from an early age throughout all the time he was growing up in their household.

They were teaching him in such a way that he was ready to hear the Gospel. They were faithful in tilling the soil, in planting the seeds, and in watering but they understood that it was ultimately God who will give the growth. And so parents, the heart of this ministry is geared towards coming alongside, co-teaching with you, co-planting with you, co-watering with you.

We at Christ Community acknowledge you, parents, as the primary disciple-maker in the lives of your kids. As we looked at Deuteronomy 6 last year, you have been given by God the task and responsibility of discipling your kids. You can't abdicate that to a pastor or a church, or to a school, or to a club. You are called by God, and equipped by his grace and power, to disciple your kids.

But it is the church, the family of God, who will come alongside you, you will pick you up when in despair, who will dialogue with you about what faithful discipleship looks like as your kids mature in life. And so part of the nextgen ministry is understanding that maturation.

- For younger children, we are teaching them God's word in a faithful manner each and every week. You get a bulletin insert of what your kids are learning and questions to follow up with them on. We understand that at the younger ages it's the foundational truths of the faith they need to be taught. The foundational truths of the Gospel, of God's Word, of the reality of Jesus who saves.

- But as they grow older, into the pre-teen and teenage years, the reasoning comes. They understand the foundational truths but they have questions, they have thoughts and crazy ideas, they have a "faith seeking understanding," to quote St. Anselm. And all of that's okay! As parents and as a youth ministry we want to be active in continuing to teach them but give them the ability to reason, and think, and ask questions from Godly men and women who can point them back to the reality of the Gospel. To use the illustration again, we are tilling, and planting, and watering, and trusting God to change the heart.

And so our focus as parents, and as the family of God, as those who care about the next generation coming up, has to be on the heart. Has to be an eternal mindset. One of my favorite writers and pastors of old is J.C. Ryle. Here's a quote that has often come back to correct my thinking: "Precious, no doubt, are these kids in your eyes; but if you love them, think often of their souls.... No part of them should be so dear to you as that part which will never die. The world, with all its glory shall pass away; the hills shall melt.... But the spirit which dwells in those kids, whom you love so well, shall outlive them all.... In every step you take about them, in every plan, and scheme, and arrangement that concerns them, do not leave out the mighty question, *how will this affect their souls?*"

We are called to parent and disciple in such a way that we keep eternity in mind.

But one reality that's underscoring this entire Gospel truth is this: You can't parent from what you don't have; you can't parent from what you don't believe; you can't parent from what you haven't experienced. So the truth undermining teaching our kids and students the Gospel is that we ourselves know the Gospel! That we have been changed and shaped by it! That we have truly experienced Jesus! That we ourselves have been given new hearts and want to see that be true of our children!

The Gospel is not just for the next-generation, its for every generation, and so we as parents, leaders, teachers, God-mothers and fathers, community group leaders, every single believer in Christ must be growing in him in order to effectively teach the Gospel.

Illustration: How many of you have flown with little children before? For those of you with more than three kids, I know why you drive everywhere. Wanting to go to Europe? You'll drive to Florida and take a boat across. Flying with young children can be difficult. And no matter what you get the stares. The prayers to God, "Please let my seat be far away from them." And honestly, I'm the one apologizing when our kids are crying or screaming on a plane. Laura on the other hand, I dare someone to give her the eye.. But anyways if you have flown with young ones then you'll know what happens. You get to board early, put your bag away, and find your seat first because you need the extra time to settle in. But then when everyone is on board, and the announcements start, something interesting happens. As the flight attendant is talking about oxygen masks, they will say, "parents flying with young children, be sure to put on your oxygen mask first. Then put on your child's." And to make sure that you heard them correctly, they will often come by and tell you directly (repeat).

And so our first inclination is "what?" Everything within us in parents wants to protect and provide, and attend to their needs before attending to mine. So shouldn't I help them first? The answer is no. Why? Because I am actually more help to my children

when I am receiving oxygen. Once I put on my mask then I can help them. In other words, **"If I really care about my children, I will care for myself first."**

When we operate out of our own strength, our own wisdom, our own righteousness parenting can and will be seen as an endeavor with no hope. But when we prioritize the Gospel, the Word of God, fellowship with believers, a faith lived out in our own lives, then we can faithfully disciple this next generation. Then we can model for them a true Christian life. This brings us to our second truth and second pillar:

2) The Power of Example (v. 10)

10 You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness...

Paul here commends Timothy for following his example. For observing his model of life, for observing his mother and grandmother's model of life in chapter 1, and for being shaped by it.

Similarly, Jesus when calling the disciples first called them to live life with him, to observe him, to imitate him. Paul called himself a spiritual father whose life should be imitated. He then exhorts Timothy here and in his letter to Titus to both follow his example and focus on their own walk and example for others.

And so this power of example we see in the text, ties in with our second pillar, Relationships.

Foundationally, we want the Gospel being taught and relationships being formed. We want that in the nextgen ministry and we want that in our church as a whole.

And so there are two realms we need to look at in the area of examples or relationships. The first

1. Within the family

- Parents we see biblically that we are called to disciple our kids. But discipleship is fundamentally relational. We teach them the Gospel, but they also watch us live out the Gospel. And as they are growing up in our homes they will often observe, evaluate, and imitate us more as they get older. Kids and teenagers want to see that your faith is real. They learn about what makes you excited and that I pray is, in part, the things of God. Your relationship with Jesus.

- The children and students in this church are looking at us as parents and asking, "Do I want to be like this?" and "Do I want the faith of my parents?"

- I can read you statistics and statistics off the books on my shelves on what is happening to the church. Of the multitudes they say are leaving after high school, of the problems with youth ministry, the problems with engaging young people, and to be frank, a lot of them I don't buy. A lot of them I think are skewed. But what they often point out is hypocrisy. The up and coming generation hates hypocrisy. They hate lip-service to the Lord but a faith that is

void. They hate seeing that their parents act one way at the church or in front of friends, and completely different when it's just them and the family.

- So real quick I want to touch on hypocrisy. Paul says to Timothy in ch. 1, **"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well."** – 2 Tim. 1:5

It's this "sincere" word we need to look at. The Greek word here is *anypokritos* and literally means un-hypocritical, undisguised, a genuineness for all to see. And so the question comes, "what is hypocrisy?" Chap Bettis is helpful here when he writes, "Some would say not practicing what you preach. That is, while agreeing with the high ethical call of following Christ, we don't actually practice it. But by that definition even the Apostle Paul was a hypocrite because he said he did not do what he wanted to do. Are we all hypocrites then? True hypocrisy is not falling short of the high commands of Christ. Faith killing, scorn inducing hypocrisy is falling short and not repenting of it. It is not caring that we are lukewarm. It is being unwilling to admit that we are complacent about following hard after the Lord."

Parents we have to model repentance for our kids. They have to see the grace of Jesus is real for us as we go to them and confess when we have sinned against them. My son is 4 years old. I have sat him down multiple times already and confessed, Jed, daddy messed up. He spoke to your mother too harshly. I got frustrated with you for no reason. I didn't show you grace. And then we pray. My son needs to know I'm not perfect. Our kids need to know we aren't perfect; but we must point them to the one who is. We must be willing to confess and live out a grace-filled life before them.

So that's the example within the family, but then secondly, we have an example and relationships provided within the church

2. Within the Family of God

- Paul is writing here to a young pastor who was ministering in a difficult context. To a young pastor who is being called to be an example, to be above reproach. And so he reminds him of how he has followed his own example. That Timothy has followed in the footsteps of Paul, and other leaders within the church.

- And so I mentioned this earlier, but a next-generation vision is not just for those who have kids in the house. Who have teenagers driving up their grocery bill. It's for all of us as the family of God. And let me remind you that you belong to that family!

- John 1:12 **"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."**

- Ephesians 2:19 **"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."**

So to those who don't have children, who are single, whose children are grown, and to the retired. We need your service. We need your wisdom. True family discipleship of the next generation involves all of us contributing to the next-generation. So serve somewhere in the church where you can aid that. Older couples get to know a younger family and impart your wisdom. Single men, single women, aid in the discipleship of teenagers. It takes a Gospel relational community to raise faithful kids.

Author Reggie Joiner, in a mass study done of youth entering college, found that teenagers who had at least 5 adults from church make a significant investment in their lives were twice as likely to continue on in the faith during the college years.

Children need the input of their parents but also the input of the "Family of God." So parents, we need to guard ourselves against what the culture tells us. Parents today often want their kids to be experience rich, even if they are relationally poor. We will take them to all the events, classes, and practices, and everything other kids are going to, even if it means being relationally poor within the church and our families.

Kids and teens need somebody besides their parents who can speak into their lives. To reinforce what is being said or to confide in an adult who is not their parent, this is part of us being a church family.

So for our younger classes, this example and relationship emphasis will look different. Teachers will be teaching them foundational truths but also trying to connect with them as children. As they progress into teenage years and join the student ministry, the relationship involves from one of solely teaching to one of counselor, encourager, a listening ear, and a mentoring relationship that adds to the growth of their faith.

3. The Power of Joy

This is where our study this morning turns into a bit of biblical theology. The bible as a whole has a LOT to say about joy. 160 plus times the word joy is used in the bible. Another 40 plus times the word laughter is used. Rejoice over 260 times. Cheerful, delight, the list goes on.

Our God is a God of joy, a God that we can delight in, a God that we should be having fun worshipping and serving and living out our lives on this Earth. And so our last pillar of the Nextgen ministry is this: fun. We are going to have fun worshipping, serving, learning, and knowing our awesome God. We are going to make sure that your kids, as they are engaged in classes, and the youth, as we meet together as a group are having fun. I want them to know and experience our God in a joyful and fun way. Gospel. Relationships. Fun.

And what's true of this is that it is true regardless of circumstances. There are times of weeping, sorrow, distress, and mourning, but our countenance, our overarching outlook on life, should be one of joy, one of fun.

The axiom is true, “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.” Our satisfaction in God, our joy, the way we live life in a fun and joyful manner is both glorifying to God and attractive to unbelievers. They desire what we have because they see a faith filled joy. And before you think this is some new idea, Ryan is up here just making this up, let me quote to you the first question from the Westminster Catechism, **Question: “What is the chief end of man?”**

Answer: The chief end of man is to glorify God and *enjoy him forever.*”

Let’s Go older.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. – Philippians 4:4

11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. – John 15:11 (spoken to disciples in a deep teaching moment)

Do you enjoy God? Do you rejoice in him? Do others see that you do?

My hope for the nextgen ministry is that we are teaching the next generation to enjoy God, to have fun knowing God and worshipping him, to take delight in the things of God and to find our satisfaction in him alone. And so we will unapologetically have fun doing that. My promise to you, as one shepherding this area of ministry, is that these three pillars will happen.

- 1) We will teach your kids the Gospel, we will faithfully teach them the word of God. How all of it points to Christ. We will partner with you as you do that as well. We will answer their questions alongside you, counsel them with you, and point them to Jesus as you do.
- 2) We will build relationships with your kids. From Sunday school teachers to youth leaders, we will make the investment to know your kid, to build a relationship, to be another Godly influence in their lives that adds to your Godly influence in their lives.
- 3) And lastly, we will have fun doing this. We will have family events, kids events, youth events, camps, missions trips, hangout nights, all the above. Because the community we want built here should never know about God and not enjoy him.

In closing, take if you have a bulletin I want you to look at the insert, the back of the note section where the family follow-up would usually be... (call to pray for Nextgen)

In a second, we are going to take communion, but even in light of this being a vision sermon we can search our hearts with the spirits help to ask, is discipling a priority in my life, am I deepening my walk with him, and do I enjoy God above all else? Does that characterize my life? Let’s go ahead and worship