

## **The Call to the Great Community!**

### **Lesson #5: “The Engine of the Church is Multigenerational Discipleship!”**

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Why did Jesus take three years to do what he could have done in three months, maybe even three weeks? Jesus came to not only die on the Cross for our sins, which He could have accomplished quite quickly in the powder-keg political and religious environment of His time, but He also came from Heaven to Earth to show us the Way to live the Spirit-led life. One of the lessons Jesus taught His disciples came through a practical illustration, found in Matthew 19:13-14, “Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” The Spirit-led life emphasizes the importance of children, giving value to most vulnerable in our midst.

Later, when Jesus restored Peter to his position of leadership in John 21:15-17, He passed on His responsibilities as a shepherd to His sheep, which included the lambs:

So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My lambs.” He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep.

The resurrected Jesus commanded Peter that the right response to loving him was caring for and tending to His sheep, including the most vulnerable lambs. You see, Jesus the Good Shepherd, was raising up disciples who could properly care for and feed the next generation of disciples. This was effectively done by the apostles, as they passed on to others what was first given to them, often through women, children, and households. Paul said to the next generation of the faith in 2 Timothy 2:2, “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful [people] who will be able to teach others also.”

In the same way that Jesus walked with His disciples to show them the Way, we are to do life with others. Timothy learned how to live the life of discipleship by being a first-hand witness of Paul’s ministry. Paul expressed this point to him in 2 Timothy 3:10-11: “Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!”

Timothy learned directly from Paul in real everyday life, on the mission field. He learned not only through words, but through actions. Timothy was more than an eyewitness; he partook of Paul’s words and deeds, and He adopted Paul’s unwavering missional focus through demanding circumstances, including suffering and persecution. Here are three passages that demonstrate how Paul and Timothy became yoked together:

**1) Acts 19:21-22.** Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

**2) 1 Corinthians 4:15-17.** For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

**3) 1 Thessalonians 3:1-3.** Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.

To pass on your faith to the next generation is to entrust something precious to you. Never forget that you can only entrust to others what you yourself first have obtained for yourself. Paul used the same word, “entrust,” in a special admonition to his protegee in 1 Timothy 1:18-19, “This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.” Paul taught the next generation how to walk in the Way of Jesus, in word and deed – when you remain focused on the task of multigenerational discipleship, you are protecting your life from getting shipwrecked! This principle can be applied to marriage and raising children.

The final part of 2 Timothy 2:2 emphasizes the entire point, Paul expressed that the faith must be passed on to those who will be able to teach others also. There must be a multiplication of laborers for the harvest, as Jesus said to His disciples in Matthew 9:37-38, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” This is for you and me, all of us – men, women, and children – the whole family. You are called by God, and it is His grace which qualifies the called. It is the Spirit at work in you. Listen to Paul teach the church this in 2 Corinthians 3:2-6:

You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Think of your life, your marriage, and your household as a small group, an outpost of the Kingdom of God to your neighborhood. Jesus Christ calls every believer to live on mission for Him in Matthew 28:18-20, the Great Commission:

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name

of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Once again, the emphasis is on passing on to others about what you first received yourself! Just like with Paul and Timothy, this is a call to discipleship relationships between the generations like a teacher to a student, a parent to a child, a master to an apprentice. Multigenerational discipleship involves entering relationships with others to learn and to teach, to share life while living on mission for Jesus. We are to yoke with Jesus, then with one another as the one body of Christ. We are to pass it on, this is the engine of the church, fueled by the Holy Spirit; it's what keeps us going from generation to generation.

Who, what, when, where, and why? I just gave you the why? Are you aligned with the mission of God? Now, you need to prayerfully determine the who, what, when and where. I want every individual, couple, and family unit to pray about it this summer. In the same way that two dozen adults are investing time and energy into 29 children over the next week, intentionally doing intergenerational discipleship at our Next Gen summer camp, how are you intentionally investing your time and energy into multigenerational discipleship? Think of one practical thing you can do today.