



Sunday August 26, 2018
PASS ON THE BATON
Family generations in God's big picture

In track and field competitions, relay races bring about a lot of excitement. They are usually won or lost in the transfer of the baton. A runner rarely drops the baton on the track. The critical moment occurs when he prepares to hand the baton to the next runner. That's the point of danger. If either of them has fumble fingers and fails to complete a secure pass, their team usually loses. The parallel metaphor we draw is in passing on the gospel of Jesus Christ to our future generations.

For a Christian man or woman, the primary task is to be a runner who is carrying a baton which is the faith in Jesus Christ. We all have a responsibility to hand the baton off to our children. If you are single or not married the transfer maybe to a person in your church or someone you mentor. Nothing is more important than passing the baton of faith to our children- no inheritance is more valuable than this. Our goal is to ensure that the baton of faith will not be dropped to those who are to come

Why is a multi-generational vision vital?

The crisis we find in the church is that 60 – 65% of our children growing in Christian homes and churches (Researched by Thom Reiner- western study) leave the church and the faith as they become adults. There is a generational crisis because we lose more of our children and grandchildren to the world than we are winning adult converts to faith in Christ. This is not a problem of the church but it is the crisis of the family. A century ago, passing faith was the job of the family. It was home centred and church supported but now in this age we are church centred and home supported (Dr Ben Freudenberg) which is one of the reasons why we lose our children

As believers, we attempt to pass on our faith with passion and vision to the world outside of our home. But through the Bible, discipleship and evangelisation is tied to begin first and foremost in our own homes. Our spiritual life should be firstly dedicated to our spiritual responsibilities to our families rather than our spiritual opportunities at church / our community.

In this message, we explore the vision God casts for us to pass on this baton which is most effective when started in families. Before that is done, we focus on why God purposed families.

Purpose of the family:

1. God created families to be discipleship centres

The core command of discipleship as of Mathew 28.19 is to make disciples of all nations. We wrestle in our churches with the how of disciple- making and searching for the solution to build authentic community groups. Yet, God has already created a solution for it through our families. Families are smaller life groups where real and authentic life happens.



The ultimate purpose of a family is spiritual. Each new marriage forms a new spiritual entity or partnership—a family—that has spiritual responsibilities to God and to society.

God not only sees the present generation, but future generations. He also wants us to have this mindset. He wants us to live our lives in the context of future generations.

Every family needs to have a long-term vision of their divine calling of being a discipleship centre. Your influence is powerful and far-reaching. As you diligently teach God's ways to your children, you are establishing principles and guidelines for future generations.

2. God designed the family as an essential engine of world evangelization that He achieves through multi-generations

God wants to fill this earth with his people with His word, with His glory. Each generation will lead to a generation which will lead to the next. Through this he intends that His word, glory and worship will spread. The family is a carrier of God's faithfulness to its generations to come.

Through the Bible, God has always connected two things – an individual family that consists of parents, children, grandparents and God's plan to use a family to impact the world. The family life is directly connected to God's plan to reach the world for Christ. The advancement of the Gospel and the family go hand in hand. It is revealed through the Bible.

1. God reveals His plan to the first family: The first commandment that he gives Adam and Eve

Gen 1: 28 "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it."

God creates Adam and Eve and reveals that his plan for the rest of history is to fill the earth with His people. This began in the Garden which continues till date- to fill the earth with His people. This happens through marriage and family where one generation moves into another.

This plan is revealed then again to Noah and his family after the God wipes out the wickedness on the earth. God here again find a righteous family to carry out his plan of filling the earth with His word and worship.

Genesis 9.1 So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."

Application - Being a family that is united, cohesive, functional – is a great testament to the world.

Flipside – divorce stats. – its not about 2 individuals alone as society claims, but it is dishonour to his name, not just yours.



2. God's plan is to reach the nations through the family:

Genesis 18:18-19 since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

God chooses Abraham and tells him that through him He will bless the nations. God tells him that he will impact the whole world. God explains how this would happen – vs 19: he would command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord. He would reach the nations through shepherding his children. God had given him a mission to reach the world but to do that he would first need to pass the faith to his children. This is the multi generation plan to fill the earth with the knowledge of God.

Application: Remind your family, that you all are God's vehicle for the Kingdom to come. Through your specific strengths – whether to pray, to give, to mobilize, to move into areas of prominence in the 7 mountains. Etc.

3. God's plan for the world starts with honour in the home

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. the first commandment for human relationships – Exodus 20.12

In the 10 commandments, the first 4 commandments are vertical and talks about man's relationship with God and the next 6 are horizontal and emphasises man's relationship with people. This makes the 5th commandment the first commandment for human relationships.

Honouring one's parents is the first moral decision a person comes about in his life.

God gives authority to various offices within the structure of his created order, and one of those offices is the office of a parent. God puts parents in a family in order to train the hearts of the children to honor their Heavenly Father. Thus, the fifth commandment is crucial for us to understand, because it relates directly to how God has ordained and ordered this world.

Application: For example, whenever a Father notices children putting down the mother, he must take care to correct them and establish honour by acknowledging the mother publicly. Similarly, husband to wife (from any outsider- say friends, colleagues, even other close relatives) Or Father & Mother, honours each other's parents – it teaches children to do the same to them in their old age.



4. God's plan for the family is in the greatest commandment

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. Deuteronomy 6: 5 -7

The greatest purpose of all our lives is to love the Lord with all our heart, soul and strength and to have a personal relationship with Jesus. After this, God continues to speak in vs 7 and gives us a specific mission and a practical action, which is, to impress the Word in our children. The mission for parents is first and foremost to our own homes with our children and grand children. God has entrusted souls to the care of the parents.

Action step: It is our desire that our children love the Lord and it should be our mission to talk about the Word, pray together, read the word together. Create family worship. Family worship is the engine that powers the family.

5. God desire for us is to recount His mighty acts to the generations

When Joshua and the Israelites crossed the Jordan, God wanted each of the tribes of Israel take 12 memorial stones to declare the mighty works of God to their children and the generations to come. (Joshua 4: 6-7)

Memorial stones are God's acts in history. The memorial stones were a physical curiosity, designed to invoke the interest of children. They were to be a reminder of their own personal experience and also served as a testimony of God's goodness and glory which God desired be recounted to children and the descendants

Samuel used stones as a memorial when God's people wanted to remember His goodness and faithfulness. First Samuel 7:12 says that when God enabled the Israelites to defeat the Philistines, the Prophet Samuel "took a stone and ... named it Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far has the Lord helped us.'"

There is a great need for us to teach our children about God's great acts. (Joshua 4:21-24). They do not inherently understand that they live in a world governed by the hand of God. As it is recounted over the generations God's glory and knowledge spreads through down into generations.

Application: Recount your salvation story or testimonies with your children or the young people you mentor. Consider writing a booklet/blog for your children and their children. Share with them times in your life when God showed His love to you through provision, protection, healing and hope. By doing so, you are doing what God commanded – testifying to God's faithfulness and help to multiply the kingdom.



6. God's plan of passing the faith is with a heart connection

Malachi 4 :5,6

5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. 6 And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse

Luke 1: 16 He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Notice that the Bible ends with the last words of God in the OT is exactly the way it opens out in the NT to Zechariah. God send John to prepare the hearts for Jesus. He did it in 2 ways- one, that he asked people to turn from their disobedience by repenting for their sins. The other, was to plead with fathers to turn their hearts to their children. When fathers and parents and children turn their hearts to each other, it is soft and ready to receive the love of the Heavenly Father. To prepare your children's hearts to receive the love of God, parents we need to have a heart connection with our children.

Satan's top priority is to break the influence of Christian parents over their children by breaking their heart connection.

Turning the hearts of the fathers to the children is the key to lasting revival. The fathers then train their children and grandchildren to follow the Bible and not follow the world. The revival is not lost in one generation, but the love for the Lord is passed from one generation to the next. God promises us that there will be severe punishment if the hearts of the fathers are not turned to the children and the children to their fathers. God will smite the earth with a curse.

Application: What does it mean for a father to turn his heart toward his child and children turn their hearts to their fathers?

Fathers (parents), can have their hearts turned away from their children simply by having no time and space with them or by ignoring them because of all that swallows their time. If communication with the children is a litany of disapproval and putdowns, the heart connection is lost. It also can be due to an embittered spirit of disappointment because they have let you down or taken you for granted or never shown gratitude for your sacrifices. Consider spending child dates where there is a one on one interaction.

Children, turns their hearts towards their fathers (parents) by obeying and honouring them in the Lord. If you are adult children and have elderly parents, turning your heart can be to care for them, ask for their wisdom, giving them the importance and due that they require as your parents. Asking them to recount their faith journeys (they will never tire of saying it again)



7. God reiterates his plan even today.

Matthew 28: 19, 20: Go [a]therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

It is a reiteration and the expansion of the First commandment in Genesis 1. The first commandment and great commission go together. God has never changed his plan, it is the same plan that was in the Garden of Eden that exists today through the power of multi generation vision.

The great commission starts at our home firstly to make disciples of those entrusted to us at our very family.

8. God’s order for discipleship and evangelisation

Acts 2: 28 -39 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the [a]remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

After the Holy Spirit has been received by the early church, Peter preaches the first evangelical sermon of the early church. Notice the progression and the order he makes

The three fold move of the Gospel follows this progression You----- your children-- -- the world (those who are far off)

FIRST COMMANDMENT	GREAT COMMISSION
Be fruitful and multiply	Make disciples (multiply spiritually)
Fill the earth	Of all nations
Subdue it (every sphere of the earth under the rule of Jesus)	Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you

Understanding this makes more sense as to why Satan attacks the very fabric of the family because it is directly connected to the advancement of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION:

Psalm 78: 4 -8 (NIV) We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. 5 He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our



ancestors to teach their children, 6 so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. 7 Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. 8 They would not be like their ancestors— a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.

Develop a multi- generational vision for the family : Its God’s desire to pass on the baton not just to our children but also to those who are yet to be born so that the purpose of God for the world for salvation can be fulfilled. Multi generational vision dramatically affects far more than your own children, we are building a generational legacy for our children’s children and their children and to descendants we may never live to see, thereby taking the gospel to the nations. If this vision is clear, then our thoughts, our speech, our actions will find ways to cultivate a legacy that is just not for your children but also for generations to come.



LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

This is a simple guide for use in Life Group discussions. Our objective is to focus on the application of the Sunday sermon - how each one is becoming a doer of the Word and building their life on God's Holy Word. The Life Group meeting would normally last for 2 hours. Each Life Group would have up to 12-15 people.

Preparation

To prepare for the Life Group meeting, you can listen to the Sermon Key Points (sermon summary in five minutes) or the full length Sunday sermon. You can also review the Sunday Sermon notes. All these are available in the "All Peoples Church Bangalore" mobile App or online at apcwo.org/sermons Pray for the Life Group meeting and invite the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Welcome

The Life Group meeting may commence with a time of prayer, worship and a fun activity.

LISTEN to God's Word

Read the following Scripture passage:

Psalms 78: 1- 8; Deuteronomy 6: 5-7; Genesis 1: 28; Matthew 28:19,20

INVESTIGATE God's Word Together

Discuss these together, giving time for people to share their insights. We encourage each one individually to make notes of their personal learning during the Group discussion.

1. How does God view individual families in His plan of redemption for the world?
2. What are some of the reasons our children lose their faith and passion for God as they become adults?
3. What are some practical measures you will take to equip your family or those entrusted to you in the faith?

If time permits, each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share one or two main learnings today and how they see themselves applying it into their specific life situations. Within the group, feel free to share areas of emotional healing that may be needed. (Keep all matters confidential).

ENCOURAGE each other by praying and ministering to one another

Get into small groups of two or three and take turns to thank God and pray for each other in the light of what was learnt today. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Expect the gifts of the Holy Spirit to flow bringing healing, releasing miracles, prophecy, etc.

Regroup and pray together for:

- 1, *families to be protected and strengthened*
- 2, *a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on us as a church and through us to bless many others in our city and nation. Nothing but a mighty work of God's Spirit can change our city and nation.*

Close by thanking God together.