

Cornerstones for Cornerstone
May 8, 2022

Did you recognize the Psalm we used to open our worship service this morning? I'd like to think some of you would. Many years ago, as part of our Wednesday night ministry, Family Bible Institute, we memorized Psalm 145 together. There is a specific verse in that Psalm that compels us to make educational responsibility our second cornerstone for Cornerstone.

Psalm 145:4 (ESV) *One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.*

A generation refers to generally to the time a child is born, grows, becomes an adult, and begins to have children. It represents roughly a 20-30 year time frame. So, for the sake of understanding the intent of this verse in Psalm 145, let's identify some generations.

Stand up, please, if you are between 80 and 100 years old.

Now, please, stand up if you are between 60 and 80 years old.

Now, please stand up if you are between 40 and 60 years old.

Ok, please stand up if you are between 20 and for years old.

And, please stand up if you are between 0 and 20 years old.

Take a moment, look around, and think about this. Who in this room, or watching online, is left out of the command for one generation to commend the works of God to another? No one, right. Everyone single one of us is part of a generation that lives among other generations. So no one is left out, right? No one has an excuse to say, "Well, I'm not in a generation that God expects to know Him and tell others about Him." Am I right? According to God's word, His intent is that one generation will commend His works to another.

You can go ahead and sit down, but don't get comfortable. If God directs one generation, here on Mother's Day 2022, to tell of Him to another, does He have any specific instructions for which generation each generation has to instruct? I'm in the 60 to 80 year old generation. **Who am I supposed to be teaching about God, and His word, and His works, and His wonders?**

God does not leave that question open. Look at Psalm 78, part of which is printed for you in the bulletin. **God makes very, very clear that He intends every preceding generation to make Him known to every successive generation.**

Psalm 78:1-7 (ESV) *Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming*

generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments;

Psalm 78 makes clear that I must, in the present, take that which I've learned of God from those before me and pass it on not only to my children, the next generation, but to my grandchildren, and even my great grandchildren. **God intends for the gospel to reach future generations, even those not yet born, through our generation in the present.** God commands the people of each generation to reach and teach the people of the next generation.

And let's not miss the point of why each generation must take the educational responsibility for the next generation:

Psalm 78:7 (ESV) so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments;

The NIV translates verse seven like this:

Psalm 78:7 (NIV) Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

The result of setting one's hope in God, putting their trust in God, is salvation. It is forgiveness of sin, removal of guilt, restoring of life, reconciling of relationship, and, ultimately the realization of the reason for which we were created, eternal life in joy in the presence of the Glory Who is God.

God puts it into the hands of one generation to give to the next generation the Truth that will allow that next generation to be saved and spend eternity in heaven and not in hell. And **God puts the educational responsibility, the discipleship responsibility for the next generation not on just a few in one generation, but on all believers in every generation.**

As part of our focus on the four cornerstones of theological identity, educational responsibility, relational opportunities, and mission priority, we are revisiting the God-given privilege and responsibility of preparing the next generation for the life of faith. We are asking how can we here at Cornerstone, moving forward into the future God has for us, participate fully and wholeheartedly in what is clearly God's will for us: discipling the next generation among us, whether they be many or few, knowing He values them all!

There are two things I want to do now. First, I want to introduce you to the resource we will be using as we come before God and say, like Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears." We want to know how to proceed. We want what we do to be biblically sound, relationally competent, and spiritually powerful. So how do we do that? **How do we make sure that we're not**

just relying on some program or ministry, but are personally investing, each of us, in discipling the next generation?

Let me introduce you to David Michael and Truth78. David is the founder and current director of a ministry to the next generation once known as Children Desiring God, and now known as Truth78. Truth78 exists to assist one generation in discipling the next generation, helping people help their children know, love, and put their trust in God.

David has written a book that outlines seven basic commitments we need to make as individuals and as a congregation as we move forward and develop Cornerstone's ministry to the next generation. The title of the book is *Zealous: Seven Commitments for the Discipleship of the Next Generation*. It is biblically sound, relationally competent, spiritually powerful, easy to read, and written by a man whose personal passion for the next generation is evident in the lives of his daughters, my nieces, and his grandchildren, my great nieces and nephew, as well as other children and adults around the world.

I have a copy of this book for each of you. I would prefer that you not restrict yourselves to one per family, please. I have enough, and frankly, I have a desire that every single one of you have your own copy as we move forward together to make discipleship of the next generation our personal and congregational mission.

Over the next few weeks we will be taking a look each week at one of the seven commitments. John Hay will begin next week, Lord willing, considering commitment #1: *Embrace a Biblical Vision for the Next Generation*.

The week after that, Mike Crotteau will lead us into commitment #2: *Foster a Robust Partnership Between Church and Home*.

Once Linda and I return from vacation we'll continue with the other five commitments:

#3 *Teach the Breadth and Depth of the Whole Counsel of God*

#4 *Proclaim the Glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ*

#5 *Disciple the Mind, Heart, and Will*

#6 *Pray with Dependence on God*

#7 *Inspire Worship of God, for the Glory of God*.

If you'll take the time to read the brief chapters on each commitment before each Sunday message, you'll be well prepared not only interact with the message God brings, but to implement in faith and obedience what He reveals to be His will for us.

I said that there were two things I wanted to do now. One was to introduce you to *Zealous* and

encourage you to invest in reading and embracing the principles for discipling the next generation that David sets out for us. The second thing I want to do is tell you why this whole idea of discipling the next generation is so important to me, personally.

It is not a short story, but I am going to shorten for now. I want you, each of you, to have a passion for discipling the next generation because I would not be here, as a pastor, as a follower of Jesus, as a living human being, had there not been a little church in a little neighborhood in Columbus, GA that took seriously the command to tell the next generation of the wondrous works of God.

The people of 13th Ave Sanctified Church of Christ shared a similar history and a similar theological identity. Many of them were, as we at Cornerstone were for a long time, related to one another. They didn't need to reach out beyond their own families to find the next generation, but God moved them to begin a bus ministry to reach children and families in South Columbus, "the other side" of town.

Bud Bush and Jim Smith came to our door one day and invited we kids to ride the bus to Sunday school and church. They came every Sunday. They came every day of Vacation Bible School. They came in summer and in winter. They came when we were little kids at Winterfield Elementary School, not so little kids at Eddy Jr High, and bigger kids at Spencer and Baker High Schools.

They taught us God's word. Not just Bible stories but the content and substance of Scripture. They made sure we knew not only what God said, but the God Who said it. I say this to their credit: my first Old Testament class in seminary began with a 100 question pop quiz the professor used to survey how much the class already knew. I got every question right. 98% of that seminary level quiz, and it was not a joke quiz, I learned in Sunday school at that little church on 13th Ave in Columbus.

But there was something else, something no less important than the teaching, that made a life-changing, life-directing difference for me. They were not perfect people. Their church was not without its conflicts and problems. Pastors came and went. Some were more memorable than others. But this I knew. Those people loved me.

There was not a one of them I couldn't talk to. Some of them were more scary than others. Some of them would grab my cheeks and squeeze and tell me what a great pastor I would be some day. I spent a lot of years trying to get away from those squeezes and those words. But let me tell you one instance that I will never forget, that forged in my heart that the people of that little church loved me.

I was in middle school. My friend Larry had started coming to church with us. He and his family, mostly his cousins, lived in the neighborhood and they would come to church on the bus from time to time. Larry was a wild child. He came from a pretty . . . "wild" family situation. One day Larry talked me into skipping church with him and going and smoking cigarettes in the crawl space under the Sunday school building. It was so cool to be cool.

I didn't think any one knew, but apparently the smell of cigarettes wafted up into the Sunday school classroom right above us, and the cigarette butts we left in the crawl space were a dead giveaway. Brother Wilson Lane was the one chosen to rescue the lost sheep.

I can hear his voice even now. "Dale, someone has been smoking in the crawl space under the Sunday school building. I don't suppose you would know anything about that, would you?" And he just looked at me. No raised eyebrows. No accusation carved a furrowed brow. Just a simple, loving pleading eyes that I would tell him the truth he already knew.

He was not my Sunday school teacher. That would have been Mrs. Elsie Brown. He was not my pastor. I don't remember who the pastor was at the time. He was not some special envoy from the deacon board. He was a man I sometimes sat next to in church when I was there alone. And he cared about me.

I told him what I knew. He told me the dangers of smoking, the risk of causing an unintentional fire under the building, the hurt and disappointment I was responsible for. He told me the truth about life and then He told me about Jesus. He told me that God sent His Son to die so that I could have a new life, so that I could live a life that pleased and honored God and one day spend eternity with God in heaven living in indescribable joy. He told me that God did not make mistakes and that I was loved and that he and God and the people at church all wanted something more for me that I could even dream. And then he simply asked me if I would please promise him not to smoke under the church anymore.

I made that promise. My friend Larry did not. Larry got angry. Larry got mad. Larry stopped coming to church. He stopped being my friend. The last time I saw Larry he was still angry. He was wearing hot pink short shorts and a fox fur jacket and was headed into the only gay bar in Columbus to see if he could make some money selling himself to the men in that bar.

The little white stucco church with beige trim and green interior not longer stands in that spot on 13th Ave. The Sunday school building is still there, last time I drove by. Don't know whether they sealed off the crawl space or not. That little church building no longer stands, but that little church stands before you today, alive in my memory, alive in my faith, alive in my preaching, alive in my love for you. I am here today with you because back then one little congregation dedicated themselves to making sure one little boy in the next generation new about the wonders of God.

I want there to be a little boy someday, or a little girl, whether we are still here or not, who will say, "Those people at that little Cornerstone church in Grand Marais, loved me so much they made sure I knew about God and His love for me, and that has made all the difference."

Cornerstone, please, let's not take the presence or the faith of the next generation for granted. Let's commit to making the eternal difference that comes when we disciple the next generation.