

How to Build a Multi-Generational Church

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Different Together
Mark 10:13-16

Many of you have asked how it is that Vineyard Columbus will address the tragic shooting of 13-year old Tyre King this past Wednesday evening. As part of this series, Different Together, Dr. Charles Montgomery and I will share the pulpit as we talk about the joys and the challenges of building a multi-racial congregation. We'll be speaking not only about the shooting, but about the subject of race in America in a message that I'm titling "Can Blacks and Whites Live Together in Peace?" So, please pray for our community over this next week. Pray for all who have been directly affected by this shooting. And pray for next weekend here at Vineyard Columbus. I think it can be an historic moment in our church. You won't want to miss it. We need God's grace in leading us forward to become what the Lord intends the church to be. A city on a hill. The light of the world. An alternative community that functions differently than the way the world functions. So, we'll be tackling that subject next week.

As for this week, I want to talk about the relationship between old and young people today. Last week, the top trending hashtag on Twitter was

#HowToConfuseAMillennial

So, for example, there was this photo:

Rotary phone pic

With this tweet:

#HowToConfuseAMillennial Ask them to make a call on this

Here's another one:

#HowToConfuseAMillennial Show them a first place trophy!

Here's another one:

#HowToConfuseAMillennial Tell them your number is in the book

Now, older adults should have been wiser in attempting to engage Millennials on social media, which is Millennial turf. The results were predictable. This was like Napoleon invading Russia in the winter. Attacking Millennials on Twitter cannot end well for Baby Boomers. Here are a few of the Millennial responses:

#HowToConfuseAMillennial Come help me get set up on this Twitter.com thing so I can post about how bad your generation is

Here's another one:

#HowToConfuseAMillennial I'm already confused. I didn't know so many old people used Twitter.

And here's one that's just a broad side against the older generation:

#HowToConfuseAMillennial Destroy the environment, destroy the economy, destroy the housing market and then call Millennials lazy!

Have you ever struggled with generational differences? You wouldn't be human if you haven't. We even struggle with generational differences in the church. You may prefer a certain kind of music. It may be 10 or 20 or even 200 years old because that particular music genre connected you with God. You likely prefer a certain style of leadership, a certain kind of teaching, even a certain length of teaching. The way you think church should operate is based in part on the generation in which you were born.

The reason that building a multi-generational church is so difficult these days is because never in history has it been common for a church to span six generations. As life spans have increased from an average age of 40 at the beginning of the 20th century to an average age of 80 today, we now have six generations in many churches. Traditionalists, born before 1925; the Silent Generation, born between 1926 and 1945; Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964; Gen X, born between 1965-1980; Millennials, born between 1981 and 2001; and the yet unnamed next generation of young people 15 years old and under.

Why is building a multi-generational church so difficult? Think about the radically different life experiences of each generation. Many Traditionalists grew up during the Depression. As a result, spending money on what is not absolutely necessary seems wasteful and frivolous. Many Traditionalists went through the Second World War. They learned how to sacrifice and be patient. They experienced good government and good authority in the military and they tend to trust authority and not ask questions. That's why Baby Boomers are often frustrated with their Traditionalist parents' approach to medical care: "What do you mean you didn't ask your doctor about why you're on that medication? Didn't you tell her that it's making you dizzy?" But Traditionalists grew up

trusting experts. They also learned at a young age to give and have had no problem tithing to a local church.

Baby Boomers (my generation) grew up in a time of rising prosperity in America. We were born with high expectations for our lives. We were the most optimistic generation in American history. We grew up believing, in the words of the old Crosby, Stills and Nash song: “We can change the world, rearrange the world!” We grew up with the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War and the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and President John F. Kennedy and his brother Bobby. So Boomers tend to be highly entrepreneurial. We have no problem starting ministries and believing God for really big things. On the other hand, Baby Boomers tend to be highly individualistic and less sacrificial than the Traditionalist generation.

Gen Xers were born during a period of American decline, politically and economically. Gen Xers were the first latchkey kids. They experienced multiple recessions, missing children’s pictures on milk cartons, the new no-fault divorces of their parents and high unemployment coupled with high inflation. As a result, Gen Xers grew up far less optimistic than Boomers. They are realists, sometimes appearing cynical to the two previous generations. They value community, especially because their families were often broken. They feel incredibly comfortable with technology.

Millennials are the most photographed generation in history. Digital photography made taking pictures really inexpensive so many Millennials have thousands of pictures of their childhoods. They are the most focused upon generation in history. More research has been done on Millennials than any other generation by far. Millennials are much closer to their parents than were Boomers. Baby Boomers kicked away from older generations (“don’t trust anyone over 30!”). Millennials actually want to be with and be mentored by the older generation. Millennials want their parents and other older adults to be involved in their lives. The Millennial generation is the most diverse in American history. Most Millennials feel very comfortable negotiating diversity. Millennials are incredibly self-confident. They were given awards just for participating. They believe their opinions ought to be heard. They want to be involved. They want to have impact. They want their lives to have meaning.

And I haven’t even talked about the yet unnamed generation of children and teens born in the twenty-first century. How can all these generations get along in one church? As I said in my opening, Jesus created the church to be an alternative society. He called the church a city on a hill, the light of the world. I believe that Vineyard Columbus was created to bring together what the world always pulls apart. Democrats and Republicans. Rich and poor. Blacks and whites. Men and women. Native born and foreign-born. And today we’re going to talk about two groups that the world definitely pulls apart, the young and the old, in a message that I’ve titled, “How to Build a Multi-Generational Church”.

Let's pray.

Father, we pray for the family of Tyre King to feel your comfort and your love. We pray your church in the city of Columbus would be a strength and source of help to them.

We pray for police officers, stuck in difficult situations, making split second decisions to not be vilified or stigmatized – but to be given your wisdom.

And for Officer Bryan Mason and his family we ask your grace and strength.

We pray for our community – ask for your character to shine during these dark days – that we may be the light of the world and a city on a hill.

Like any building project, we need to start with the foundation. If we're going to build a multi-generational church, what is the foundation for this church?

The foundation

I want to picture, if you will, a building site with three layers of foundation stone. We really want the church to be built on something solid. The first layer of foundation stone is

God's intention for the church

Here's what we read in

Acts 2:17-18

¹⁷ “In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

Peter says that one of the marks of the church that the Holy Spirit created on Pentecost is the breaking down of dividing walls of gender. He says that your sons and daughters will prophesy. And then in verse 18,

Acts 2:18

¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

The church is meant to break down dividing walls of age. We read about young men seeing visions and old men dreaming dreams. Finally, we read about how the church is meant to break down dividing walls of rank. We read here about, “Even on my servants, both men and women”.

The church that God created on the Day of Pentecost was never intended to include just one generation. A church where everyone is old. Or a church where everyone is a Millennial. God’s intention on the Day of Pentecost is that the church be multi-generational. Young and old together worshipping him. So what is God’s design of the church?

God’s design of the church

We read this in:

1 Corinthians 12:20-23

20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor.

1 Corinthians 12 communicates to us the Apostle Paul’s best known image of the church. The church is the Body of Christ. There are lots of reasons why the Apostle Paul speaks about the church as being the Body of Christ. A body is an organic, living metaphor. He doesn’t say that the church is an institution. The church is a 501c3 not-for-profit corporation. The church is a building located on Cooper Road or in Pickerington or on Lane Avenue or off of Sawmill Road. The church is a body. It’s a living thing. It’s animated by the Spirit of Jesus Christ who lives in the church. This is an organic, living metaphor.

The church as a body reminds us of the church’s diversity. We know that in the human body there are all kinds of different cells. Cells that make up the blood. Cells that make up our skeleton. Cells that make up our nerves. There are all kinds of organs. The heart has a different function than the kidneys do. The kidneys have a different function than the skin. The metaphor of the body reminds us of the incredible diversity that ought to exist in the church. And yet, despite the diversity of our various body parts, there is a body an essential unity. We are, after all, one body that is interdependent. We need every body part. All the parts are indispensable.

The Apostle Paul says this:

1 Corinthians 12:21

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

God designed the church so that every single one of us is needed. Every part, every organ is necessary. Because this is a body. It's not an institution or some inanimate structure. The church is a living thing in which every person is necessary.

So let me ask you a question. Who is it in the church that we're tempted to look at and say, "I don't need you!" Who do we look at in the church and say, "I could get along much better without you!" It's the difficult people, isn't it? It's the people who drain us. The people who rub us the wrong way. The people who offend us. The people who are different than us. We can't imagine how we can be like the title of this series, "Different Together". We just can't relate to this other person because of their personality style, their temperament, their politics, their economic class, their race or perhaps even their age.

Who do we say, "I don't need you" to in our small groups? In our church? I really wish I didn't have to associate with them in this ministry? I really wish I didn't have to rub shoulders with such and such a person. I wish they weren't here. Who do we say that to? We say it to the difficult people. Let's throw out those broken tiles from our mosaic. They are useless. They aren't needed in this church.

Let me offer you three brief lessons about difficult people. Number 1, do you realize that if we got rid of all the difficult people in this church, our building would be absolutely empty? Has it occurred to you that you are someone else's difficult person? There is not one of us that isn't a difficult person to someone else. Every single one of us is a problem person for another person. When you think of difficult people, make sure you check the box next to your name because I guarantee it, friend, you are someone else's difficult person. You fit the bill exactly. You either talk too much or you talk too little. You have an explosive temper or you are just a people pleaser and a wimp. You are too cautious or you are too impulsive in your decision making. You are too emotional or you are too unemotional. You are too stuck up or you are too insecure. You are too ordered or too disordered. You are too something in someone else's eyes.

If we got rid of all the difficult people in this church, the church would be absolutely empty. And we would just shut the lights out and convert the building into a warehouse.

Mature Christians understand that they are someone's difficult person. Second, mature Christians know they need difficult people around them because the Christian church is meant to be a total miracle. See, when we are talking about the Holy Spirit and what the Holy Spirit does in the church, what we are fundamentally saying is that the church of Jesus Christ is not meant to be explainable in human terms. What Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 12 is a spiritual understanding of our relationships that requires the Holy Spirit.

Where is the astounding miracle when you and four of your best girlfriends get together for lunch and enjoy each other's company? Most of our relationships are totally understandable in terms of natural affinity. You and three friends, you and your best buddy or your girlfriend get together and you enjoy each other because you have similar interests and similar backgrounds and similar values and similar politics and so on. Now I am in no way opposed to natural affinity or friendship, we need friends, but there is no miracle in that. I mean, there is nothing different between us and people in the world who have three or four friends that they enjoy. You say, "Why do I need the difficult person in my life?"

Here's a third thing. Christian maturity cannot be brought forth in your life without difficult people and without difficult circumstances. I mean how is the fruit of the Spirit of patience produced in your life unless you are put in a situation that calls for you to be patient? How can you learn the fruit of the Spirit of self-control, unless you are tempted to be angry or tempted to respond in kind? Do you understand that your friends and pleasant circumstances generally don't produce the fruit of the Spirit in your life? People you enjoy being around do not produce the fruit of the Spirit in your life. Difficult people do.

One person wrote that difficult people are the nails that God uses to nail our flesh to the cross. If you say you don't need difficult people in your life or a particular difficult person in your life, a particularly draining person in your life, then you reveal about yourself a profound lack of personal insight regarding your own deficiencies.

We need everyone. We need edges knocked off of us. It is unpleasant, I know. No one likes to be ground down. No one likes the edge to be filed off of them. No one likes to be stretched spiritually to love someone that we don't love, to be kind when we feel like being unkind, to be patient when we feel like being impatient and hasty. But God has arranged this. God designed the church to cause us to need everyone including the difficult people!

Here's the third level of foundation stone. I've spoken about God's intention for the church, God's design of the church. And when building a great foundation for a multi-generational church, we need to remind ourselves of

God's ownership of the church

As the church stretches itself to accommodate young adults, it's easy for older adults to say, "You know, I very much want to have a church that doesn't just grow progressively older and older. A church that constantly accommodates young people and is willing to change. But the truth is that I'm afraid that I'm going to be pushed to the side. I still have plenty of life left in me. I still have lots to give. It's hard for me to not always be in the center of things the way I used to because someone else is doing what I used to do. I used to connect with the worship music at this church and I know why we're changing and I support that, but it's really hard for me. Sometimes I wish that things could go back to the way they used to be 20 years ago or 30 years ago or 40 years ago."

Or a young adult might come in, and as one young adult recently said, "Gosh, I love the sermon, but your music is so old school!" And this young adult was referring to a Matt Redman song as "old school". How do we deal with the discomfort that we all feel when our preferences don't win the day as we seek to build a multi-generational, much less a multi-ethnic, church. How do we deal with that discomfort? This music, this style, this way of doing things wouldn't always be our first choice.

I believe spiritually mature people have learned how to respond to change and differences that they may not like. Spiritually mature people constantly give the church back to Jesus Christ. Spiritually mature people understand that we don't own the church, Jesus does. He's the head of the body. The church belongs to him and he gets to set the agenda in order to produce a church that reflects the kingdom of God in all of its fullness in our community.

What do you do when your preferences don't win in some area or another in the church? Give the church back to Jesus Christ and praise him because his thoughts are above our thoughts and his ways are above our ways. Once this foundation is built, we need to now put on the first story.

The first story

The first story in building a multi-generational church requires those of us who are adults to understand our need for children.

Adults need for children

Now there are a number of different approaches that adults in a church can take to children. One of the most common is that we simply ignore children.

Ignore children

Let me tell you a story. A little girl grew up in southern California in the early 1960's. Her family was the kind of family that if the church doors were open, they were there. Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night. When this little girl was 5-years old, her older sister came home overflowing with excitement. She said, "Becky, I accepted Jesus Christ today at church!" Little five-year old Becky decided that's what she wanted to do because she saw her sister changing. She just didn't know how to do it.

Well, little Becky's opportunity came a few months later. She was sitting in her family's pew on a Sunday evening and her heart began beating really fast because the pastor was coming to the end of his sermon and she knew that he would ask people if tonight they wanted to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. So, the pastor got to the end of his sermon and he said, "Now, bow your head. If any one of you wants to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior raise your hand." Becky knew from prior experience that anyone who raised their hand would be invited to come forward for prayer with the pastor so her hand shot up. She thought, "I want to accept Jesus. I want to have happen in my life what happened in my sister's life."

The pastor scanned the crowd in his little church. And he said, "Is there anyone who wants to accept Christ? Anyone? Anyone?" Becky was there waving her hand. And the pastor then said, "Well, we'll just end the service by kneeling at our pew for a closing word of prayer."

Little Becky was so disappointed. She didn't know if the pastor just didn't see her or didn't think she was old enough to really count. With the rest of the congregation she knelt down by the pew and she thought to herself, "I guess I could accept Jesus just by myself." Kneeling there in that little church building, 5-year old Becky said, "Jesus, please come into my heart. I want to have a relationship with you." She said that immediately a feeling of warmth came over her body and she knew that her prayer had been heard. That Jesus had entered her heart.

Becky grew up and became a pastor. Now, Becky Olmstead, for the last 10 years, has led the Vineyard Association's National Task Force for Children where she teaches adults to not ignore children.

There's another approach to children that adults sometimes take. That is to

Disdain children

That's what the disciples of Jesus did. Let's look at

Mark 10:13-16

¹³ People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them,

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”¹⁵ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”¹⁶ And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Five years ago, Marlene and I were on vacation and as we often do, we found a local church to go to on the weekend because we figure that God deserves to be praised and worshipped every week even when we are on vacation.

So, we planned our Saturday around going to church on Saturday evening. We were with our granddaughter, Naomi. We got out of the pool early to shower and to get dressed and I talked with Naomi about why it is that Grandma and Grandpa would set time aside on vacation to worship Christ and how important it is to get together with other believers and acknowledge Jesus. We all got dressed, Naomi was wearing a pretty little dress. We went to this very large church, a famous church. Naomi had said, “Grandma and Grandpa, would it be ok if I just stayed with you. I don’t want to go to Sunday school. I don’t know any of the kids there.” We said, “Of course, you can sit with us.”

So, we walked into the sanctuary about 10 minutes before the Saturday evening service was going to begin and we were immediately confronted by one of the ushers. He had a grimace on his face and he said, “How old is she?” I knew we were in trouble. He didn’t look happy. I said, “She’s eight years old. I’m a pastor and our granddaughter has been raised in church and she won’t be loud, she won’t disturb anyone. She understands how to behave in church.” The usher said, “We have a policy that children under 12 shouldn’t be in church.” I responded, “OK. I’m sorry. We’re on vacation, we don’t normally come to this church, but I promise you she’ll be well-behaved.”

We sat down in one of the rows, waiting for the service to begin. About a minute before the service began, as the church was beginning to fill up, I hear this noise. “Psst. Psst. You, over here.” I turned around and it’s the head usher. She said, “I need to speak to you right now.” So, I got up and she said, “How old is she?” I said, “She’s eight years old.” She said, “Well, we have a policy in this church to not allow children who are under 12 to be in the sanctuary. She can go to children’s ministry or we have a room in the back where you can sit with her and watch on closed circuit TV, but she can’t be in here.” And, I said, “Look, I’m a pastor. This is my granddaughter. She has been raised in church. She knows how to behave in church. There won’t be any problem with her. I promise you.” She said, “Well, I’m sorry. This would set a dangerous precedent. I can show you where the room is where kids need to go. Our pastor has written something about this.”

She hands me a brochure. The brochure was about why it was important for newcomers to the church to serve the church members by not bringing their children in

because their kids could take away from people's experience of hearing God's word. I look at the brochure and then I look at this woman. I said, "Just forget it." I called Marlene and Naomi out from the pew and said, "Come on, let's get out of here." The whole way back to the apartment we were renting, I was just fuming. So this church believes that it's a biblical church. What about Jesus' words? "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Now, I understand, don't get me wrong. If we had a baby who was crying continually or a toddler who kept talking and disturbing everyone around them so that they could not hear the message, I understand. That's simple politeness. Most thoughtful adults will walk out with a baby or a toddler who is getting noisy to sit in the lobby or sit in another space so as not to disturb those near us who are trying to listen. But to say that any child under 12 who's in the sanctuary is a bad precedent, even a child who is well behaved, it's exactly what the disciples were doing with these little children. And it made Jesus angry.

If we are not going to ignore or disdain children, how should we relate? We ought to...

Cherish children

It's interesting in Mark 10, that Jesus doesn't say, "Bring the children to me" to the mothers. He says rather, "Let the children come to me." That's a big difference in Jesus' choice of verb. He was saying that children have a built in desire to seek God. They were created by the Lord to naturally seek him.

Wess Stafford in his wonderful book titled *Just a Minute* said this,

Slide

"Whenever a child is mentioned in scripture I have found that God is up to something important. In fact, it is sometimes a task too important to entrust to an adult whose cement has long since set. I guess we adults think too much. Maybe we know too much. Probably both: we think we know too much!"

So, when God wants to communicate a word of judgment to an old priest named Eli, God sees that Eli's antenna had grown rusty. He's no longer listening to the Lord. It's really important, but God gets through to Eli and the Nation of Israel. The task is so important that he entrusts it to a little boy named Samuel.

Let me tell you a story. There's a little boy named Bill. He was in second grade in a Christian school in Kalamazoo, Michigan. His class was reading a story about this old priest named Eli and God speaking through a young boy named Samuel. The recess bell rang and the class ran out to the playground and Billy sat in his chair, not moving. Normally, he would be racing out ahead of the other kids.

The teacher said, "Billy, what's wrong?"

Billy said, "Do you think God still speaks to boys?"

The teacher said, "I believe with all of my being that God still speaks to boys. I think God will talk to anyone provided they listen." The teacher reached into her desk and she pulled out a little paper with a poem written on it. She said, "If you are really interested in what this Bible story talked about, you might want to read this poem later tonight."

The next morning, the recess bell rang and Billy ran towards the door. The teacher grabbed him by his shirt and said, "Billy, what did you think of the poem that I gave you last night?"

Billy said, "I really liked it."

The teacher raised one eyebrow and said, "Did you even read it?"

Billy said, "Yeah, I memorized it."

Now, she's really suspicious and says, "You did not."

"Yes, I did."

"Then, recite it for me. Tell me what it said."

Little second grade Billy said,

"Oh give me Samuel's ear,
An open ear, O Lord,
Alive and quick to hear each whisper of thy Word,
Like him who answered to thy call,
And to obey thee first of all."

The teacher was shocked and said, "Billy, you keep listening to God and he's going to do something great in your life."

That little boy grew up to be Pastor Bill Hybels. Pastor of one of America's leading churches called Willow Creek. Sometimes when God wants to do something really important, he uses a child. Do you believe that?

Jesus says that adults need the model of children's dependence, children's faith, children's simplicity to teach us how to relate to God.

Adults don't just need children, children need adults.

Children's need for adults

Let me read to you Psalm 78:

Psalm 78:2-7

I will open my mouth with a parable;

I will utter hidden things, things from of old—

³ things we have heard and known,
things our ancestors have told us.

⁴ 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.

God tells us that from generation to generation, we need to pass on the story of God's great deeds. From generation to generation, we need to pass on the story of who God is and how we can relate to him. The reason that Christianity didn't die out after the initial apostles died is because they passed on their faith to the next generation. The reason Christianity didn't die out in the second century or the third century or the fifth or the fifteenth or the nineteenth is because the generations that came before us understood that they were just a link in the chain and they had a responsibility to pass on the faith to the next generation. How young is too young to start talking to children about Jesus?

Should we wait until age 12 or 10? Apparently, openness to Jesus begins quite early. John the Baptist jumped up and down in his mother's womb when the pregnant Mary showed up carrying Jesus in her womb. Apparently, even children in the womb can be spiritually sensitive to the presence of Jesus. When should we begin to talk to children about Jesus? It's never too soon to start.

The Jesuits famously boasted: “Give me a child for the first seven years, and I will give you a man!” In other words, the easiest way to shape a person for a lifetime is to impact them while they are still young.

Scientists have observed that the brains of children are psychologically primed for religion (this makes sense if the world was, as the Bible claims, made by God and that people are made in God’s image. It suggests that God wants people to have a relationship with himself from earliest childhood!). Richard Dawkins, the outspoken atheist, acknowledges that children are psychologically primed to believe in God, but his bizarre explanation is that inclination to religion is a “misfire of the brain!” In other words, in Dawkins’ Alice In Wonderland world evolution did not produce a helpful survival mechanism for children to navigate our world. Rather, somehow evolution went awry and failed to select out what is, in fact, a dangerous trait – a natural tendency on the part of children to believe in God.

Jesus put children at the very center of his activity in this world. We read: “But Jesus, knowing the reason of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side and said to them, ‘Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and who ever receives me receives Him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great’” (Luke 9:47-48). Consider the following: Jesus asks, Do you want to enter God’s kingdom? Become like little children! Do you want to be great in God’s eyes? Then become like little children. Do you want to welcome and receive Jesus? Then welcome little children. Do you want to avoid judgment at God’s hand? Then don’t lead little children astray. Do you want to identify with God’s plans? Then don’t despise little children!

Today one of the most exciting movements in global missions is called “The 4/14 Window.” Perhaps you’ve heard of “The 10/40 Window.” The 10/40 Window is that part of the globe from 10° North to 40° North latitude encompassing North Africa, the Middle East, and much of Asia which is the least evangelized portion of our globe. The 10/40 Window is the home of most of the world’s Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Animists.

But this is the portion of the world where the gospel has grown the fastest in the last 20 years, more than triple the rate of the annual population growth. What accounts for this great surge of Christian faith? One of the factors is that missionaries are focusing upon children between the ages of 4 and 14 (The 4/14 Window), not as a tangential part of their mission strategy, but at the center of their mission strategy.

You know, here at Vineyard Columbus, we have a community of people called VineyardKids. As I said, age is not a factor in who God chooses to speak to and work through. We’re training our children to lead in worship, to lay hands on others for healing, to proclaim the gospel to their friends. We’re helping kids nurture their

relationship with Christ. Our goal this weekend is to find 75 people to commit themselves to passing on Christian faith to children.

You say, “I’m not very good with children. I don’t know very much about kids. I don’t have any children of my own. I’m a single adult. We’re a childless couple. I’m in my 60’s.”

Listen, you weren’t born 60 years old. Or 20 or 30 or 40 or 50. Every single adult spent 18 years getting a post-graduate degree in being a child. If you were ever a child, you are qualified. We especially are seeking men. Our kids and youth greatly benefit from having male mentors.

Two Particular Needs:

- A particular area of need is for people to serve our ministry to those with special needs. It seems people feel inadequate of serving these groups well...not so! Come and see what the Lord will do with a willing heart.
- We are also very much in need of adults to lead and host VC Student Small Groups for Middle and High schoolers. At Cooper, we currently have 5 Middle School groups and 7 High School groups. Our goal is to bring that total to 10 each by the end of the school year. We want to increase the number of Student small groups at all of our campuses.
 - We are specifically looking for hosts in the Olentangy/Powell area.
- Our VC Student ministry also needs adult leaders to help connect and disciple Middle and High School students during our weekend services.

Next Steps

- At Cooper Road just walk out to the lobby and find someone to talk to at the tables with the balloons. There are opportunities to serve kids and youth of all ages.
- Each campus has unique needs and opportunities to engage with our children and youth also. You can head to their information area to learn more and sign up.

I want you to watch this video. Let me quickly tell you about the second story.

The second story

Slide

Young adults’ need for older adults

You know, in the Samuel story that I spoke about before, the Lord spoke to Samuel. It took an older adult, Eli, to help Samuel discern the voice of the Lord. God was speaking

to the little boy, Samuel, but Samuel didn't know that it was God. Older adults have a function in young adults' lives – to help young adults discern the voice of God. Sometimes we call the voice of God wisdom. Older adults can help younger adults wisely navigate the critical decisions that we need to make in order to successfully do life.

How do you navigate the critical decision about who we should marry? Or even who we should date? How do you build a successful marriage? How do you figure out what career path you ought to take or how to grow as a Christian? Or how to raise kids? Young adults need older adults to help them with vocational choices, to help them navigate relationships, to help them prioritize God's word, to help them build a sustainable Christian walk that will last a lifetime.

But, friends,

Older adults need young adults

Older adults need the dreams of young adults. We need the idealism of young adults because many of us have stopped dreaming and given up our ideals. We need the life of young adults in the midst of our congregation. We need the zeal. We need the risk-taking of young adults to remind us that we always need to venture out, we always need to take risks. We need young adults to remind us of aspects of the gospel that have gotten neglected by tradition or by disuse.

Renewal in a church often happens when a young adult says, "Well, I'm seeing this in my Bible, but we don't do that. Why don't we do that?" Older adults just get used to doing church a certain way. We need fresh eyes, young eyes, to look at the scripture and challenge us.

Brothers and sisters, the church is called to be the light of the world, the city on a hill, an alternative community. Old people and young people need each other if we're ever going to be the church that Jesus Christ wants us to be.

Let's pray.

How to Build a Multi-Generational Church

Rich Nathan
September 17 & 18, 2016
Different Together
Mark 10:13-16

- I. The foundation
 - A. God's intention for the church
 - B. God's design of the church
 - C. God's ownership of the church
- II. The first story
 - A. Adults' need for children
 - 1. Ignore children
 - 2. Disdain children
 - 3. Cherish children
 - B. Children's need for Adults
- III. The second story
 - A. Young adults' need for older adults
 - B. Older Adults' need young adults