



**Telling the Story:
Discipling the Next Generation
Seminar #1
08 March 2020**

Purpose: To equip ourselves as individuals, parents, and the body of Christ to disciple the next generation. In particular, to learn how to tell the stories of God's goodness in our lives, and to join our discipleship with the discipleship of the next generation.

The Reality: The top five reasons young Christians (23-30 years old) stopped attending church:¹

1. "I moved to college and stopped attending church." - 34%
2. "Church members seemed judgmental or hypocritical." - 32%
3. "I didn't feel connected to people in my church." - 29%
4. "I disagreed with the church's stance on political/social issues." - 25%
5. "My work responsibilities prevented me from attending." - 24%

The Opportunity: Cultivating genuine, intergenerational relationships creates a space where the next generation can be trained to see God's goodness in their lives, in our lives, and in the world around us. **In telling the story well, we invite them to live the story alongside us.** This is the difference between love-driven, proactive discipleship and fear-driven, reactive indoctrination.

Telling The Story: "The Bible lays out the great story of our world and helps us interpret our lives and make decisions within the framework of a biblical worldview." -TGC

The good news of Jesus Christ is God's call on our lives to join His story and be a part of His kingdom. We see throughout the Bible this refrain, "Remember!" Remember that God has called you out of darkness and into light, out of slavery and into freedom, out of sin and death, and into righteousness and life. We need to cultivate a sacred memory, but this is almost never done individually in Scripture. **The gospel is meant to be remembered together and passed on to the next generation.**

How do we cultivate a sacred memory of God's goodness?

¹ Cited from Griffin Paul Jackson, "The Top Reasons Young People Drop Out of Church," *Christianity Today*, 15 January, 2019, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/january/church-drop-out-college-young-adults-hiatus-lifeway-survey.html>.

- Joshua 4:21-24 - Cultivate 'memorials' that compel you and your family to revisit what God has done in the past and how that has impacted you.
- Ruth 4:13-22 - Cultivate a testimony of God's work in your family through the generations.
- Ephesians 2:11-22 - Cultivate a memory of who you once were apart from Christ, cultivate wonder and awe at who you are now in Christ, and cultivate a sense of glory at what God is building out of his people.
- 2 Timothy 1:3-7 - Cultivate a rhythm of prayer for our children in the faith so that they may fan into flame the gift of God.

Application:

- Culture is greater than technique: "**It's the culture of the family and church, and that they integrate children and young people into spiritual disciplines, not the *how* that matters most.** Also notable is the impact of **the parents' example** of reading Scripture, taking part in service projects, sharing their faith, and asking forgiveness after sinning. In other words, the more the repentant, joyful Christian life was **modeled**, the more likely children were to remain in the faith."²
- Three key practices:
 - Repentance: "Children are more likely to repent and ask forgiveness when they've seen parents do so, and when they've experienced grace in human relationships."³
 - Gratitude: The regular rhythm of thanking God for specific ways He has been good.
 - Humility: Being quick to listen, cultivating a teachable spirit, wrestling with questions, disagreeing without breaking unity, and speaking the truth in love.
- Age-specific differentiation:
 - **Elementary School:** Emphasize the basics of God's story and his work in your life
 - **Middle School:** Help build categories for understanding and asking questions
 - **High School:** Give space for genuine wrestling with faith. Be open about struggles but emphasize the grace of God at work in and through our struggles

² Trevin Wax, "Parents, Take Note of the Spiritual Practices Common to Kids Who Flourish as Adults," *The Gospel Coalition*, 22 January 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/parents-take-note-spiritual-practices-common-kids-flourish-adults/>.

³ Ibid.