Series: Vision

January 28, 2018

Message Four:

**Pass the Baton**

Hebrews 12:1-3

Growth Track

Thanks for faithfulness

**Intro:** I believe God is giving us a vision for what He wants to do and how He wants to do it here.

We have talked about -

* How We See this Vision through fasting.
* How prayer is two-way - both speaking and listening to God.
* Last week we shared our four purposes -
  + Know God through Sunday Services
  + Find Freedom through Small Groups
  + Discover Purpose through our Growth Track
  + Make a Difference - by serving on a Dream Team

A huge part of what God wants to do is for us to pass this on to the Next Generation.

Part of this involves learning their culture the way we would if we were going overseas to a foreign culture - learn how to sing their songs, speak their language, wear their clothes - connect with them so that they will receive the message that must be passed on.

Hebrews 12:1-3 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne. Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won’t become weary and give up.

Writing to Jewish Christians to not give up.

Here’s the picture - we are running a race! We are part of a Divine Relay - It’s 2018 - TAG - we are it!

**Big Idea: We are running with the baton of faith for our generation and the next generation!**

Sidney Olympics - 2000

4 x 100 meter relay - USA Women’s Team the fastest team on paper. Each woman was the fastest in their 100 meter split. On paper they should have not only won, but won by a large margin.

And the race was going as expected, until the 3rd exchange. The third runner thought it was won, and got lazy in the exchange zone - a 20 meter zone …

The speed of the runners is important, but the exchanges are equally as important! What happens in the few seconds in those 20 meters will determine the outcome of the race.

In this race, in this exchange, the Americans got lazy, the team from the Bahamas took off - and because the exchange was bad, in the last 100 meters, the Bahamas won, followed by Jamaica, and the USA came in 3rd! They blew the exchange!

2004 - Athens Olympics - Marion Jones had jumped 11 times in the long jump the day before - she was part of the team - was tired from the long jump event the previous day - her and Lauren Williams had done this exchange 100’s of times - but because of weariness, Lauren Williams took off in the exchange zone and Marion Williams is shouting, “I can’t get you! I can’t get you!” By the time she handed the baton over, it was outside of the exchange zone - DISQUALIFIED! The fastest team on paper, but disqualified, because they didn’t make the exchange.

2008 - Beijing Olympics - Again, the women’s 4 x 100 team is the fastest on paper … this time when they got into the exchange zone - Lauren Williams was to hand off - she bumped into the woman she was handing to - and they dropped the baton - DISQUALIFIED!

2012 - London Olympics - Again, USA fastest - this time the exchanges were seamless and perfect - and finally the USA won as they should have.

The exchange is crucial! In each of these races, the first runner was winning, the second runner was winning, but the deal is, it doesn’t matter how great we do right here, right now, we have to realize that we are carrying a baton of faith for our generation, we are in an exchange zone right now, and we have to make a clean pass.

The enemy wants us to drop the baton. He doesn’t want us to hand it off. He wants us to get sloppy and think, “I’m saved, what does it matter what the next generation does!” That’s a losing philosophy.

We can build a great church in this generation, and that’s great - but we ultimately lose if we don’t pass this on!

There is a fight on for this next generation! We have huge ministries, great music, Christian TV, radio, bookstores, conferences, podcasts - but in the end, if we don’t take personal responsibility to pass this baton of faith on, we won’t do what God has called us to do in this generation.

One of the saddest passages of Scripture -

Judges 2:7-10 - And the Israelites served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and the leaders who outlived him—those who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel.

Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110…

After that generation died, another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the Lord or remember the mighty things he had done for Israel.

Joshua’s generation went into the Promised Land - they saw huge miracles - Jordan River - Jericho - Giants defeated - they took rulership of the land - everyone who fought the fight knew God and what He could do -

But Joshua failed - because another generation rose up who did not know the Lord or the works He did for Israel. We fail if we do not pass this on!

Too much of our culture is self-focused - what can I do for me? How can I arrive? Succeed? Provide for myself? Even spiritually - how can I grow in Christ?

To be a self-focused Christian is to be an immature Christian.

**The end result of our personal growth should be bringing others to Christ.**

**The end result of the spirituality of this generation should be to pass this faith on to the Next Generation.**

It is not about us - or it ends with us.

Hebrews -

**> This is a crowd of witnesses - not spectators.**

Spectators just show up - Monday morning quarterbacks - “Back in my day - shoulda won State!”

We have a bunch of spectators … blogs - critiques, criticisms, this is how it should be done …

There are 50,000 people in the stands, there are only a few down on the field fighting the fight. How many of us are getting out of the stands and getting involved in the race - and are committed to passing this on?

Hebrews 11 - … many were in the fight … suffered for it … passed the faith on … that’s why we are here today! This has been passed down to us - we must pass it down to the next.

What about the generations yet to be born?

God is looking for people who don’t just want to be noticed in their leg of the race, but want to be a part of passing this life on. This is the most important thing we can do for our nation.

This means we have to live this outside of this building.

**If we get lazy in this exchange zone, we will drop the baton.**

* Is moral purity important? If we don’t live it, we can’t pass it on. Every time we compromise our moral purity, we drop the faith for the next generation.
* When we do what we want to do without pursuing God’s wisdom, we drop the baton.
* When we rationalize what we watch on Netflix and online and receive impurity into our lives, we drop the baton for the Next Generation.
* Every time we come up with some excuse for our personal pursuit of pleasure being more important than ministry, and connection with other believers in worship and small groups - we drop the baton for the Next Generation.

Are we going to be witnesses in this day - or just spectators?

**> We must strip off both weight and sin.**

Hebrews 12:1 - …let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up.

Difference between weight and sin -

**Weight** could be a good thing that’s not a sin - but it’s no longer a God thing.

* Maybe it’s the people you spend most of your time with. Are you influencing them positively, or are they influencing you negatively? Even if they are also believers. If people are influencing you in a way that is not causing your commitment to be deeper, it could be a weight you need to drop.
* Spending too much time being entertained … seeking entertainment … seeking a position that may grant you money, but not something to which God has called you.
* Are you comparing yourself with others? Maybe you think God is blessing other people more? Drop that weight! Or you’ll drop the baton. STAY IN YOUR LANE … DON’T LOOK BACK!

**Sin** -

People don’t like to believe there is sin today. Even in the church - what is sin? We make mistakes - everybody fails, but we don’t really want to make a big deal about that.

Maybe you haven’t noticed this, but the world’s a mess!

The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.

If our greatest need was more money - God would have sent us an economist.

If our greatest need was mental health, God would have sent us a psychologist.

If our greatest need was a better environment, God would have sent us an environmentalist.

But - the greatest need in the world is to be forgiven of and set free from sin, so God sent us the only Savior.

Two bottles - both contain poison - but we don’t want to offend anyone - we take the poison label off - and we put on another label which says, “Chocolate milk!”

***Have bottles with labels for illustration -***

I take this and put in your refrigerator. You are going to believe I am a madman.

The milder you make the label, the more potent is the danger of the poison.

It is a lie to believe that what the Bible says will separate you from God’s best plan for your life is not sin!

Christine Caine … - had thyroid cancer. What if the doctors had looked at her scans, knew what she had, and they knew how to treat her to a cure - but they didn’t want her to feel bad. They didn’t want her to feel uncomfortable - so they decide not to tell her she has cancer. They tell her she has a cold and give her Tylenol!

That’s medical malpractice! Those doctors could be sued to poverty and never practice medicine again.

Why should we commit spiritual malpractice to not LOVINGLY tell people that they need help and offer them the CURE which is faith in who Jesus is and His sacrifice!

Everyone of us here who are in a relationship with Jesus - if someone had not told us that, we would be lost and miserable today!

Anyone who has received this has an obligation to share this Good News with others. Every generation who receives this Good News has an obligation to pass this on to the Next Generation.

Malachi 2:15 tells us our highest focus for evangelism is our children. God wants healthy marriages so that we will have godly children - passing this on to the Next Generation.

If you are grandparents - this doesn’t end - God wants to use you to pass this on two generations down! Don’t give up! Don’t think everything has to stay the way you received it!

I ran - shoes are different today - technology is different - training programs are different - and records keep getting broken!

***Have shoes for illustration.***

If there is a more effective way to reach the Next Generation with the same message, that’s the method we will use!

**> Receiving is as important as passing.**

Next Generation - you’ve got to receive this -

“Run with endurance” - Endurance in Grk - bear up under - bear the pressure (look up) -

There’s no app for endurance. Even in our instant society today, some things take time. If we click on a webpage and it takes 2 seconds to move to that page, the computer is too slow! Spiritual growth takes time. We have to go through some things to get to some places.

If I’m running, but the person I’m passing to is standing still, we run into each other and drop the baton.

We have to run together for a season to be successful - this is what we want to do. Let’s all run together for a season - not running in separate generations in separate ways - those are separate races. But if we are going to win this race that has multiple participants, we’ve got to run together in the exchange zone. This is where we are now.

God has given us a vision. He wants us to run with it. Let’s run together!

When the baton is dropped, weak runners start to blame the other …. We’re on the same team - let’s just fix it together!

When I want everything in the church to be done the way I like it … not my will …

When I disagree with the vision of the church … more than one vision is 2 visions - di-vision - … not my will …

**Are you carrying this baton?**

**What’s your Next Step?**

* Know God
* Connect to a group - this is where you will grow -
* Growth Track - get involved in ministry!
* Maybe you’ve been involved in ministry for a while - now it’s time for you to start your own group -

Those who jump into leadership, they grow! Their growth is at least as greater if not greater than those they serve in their groups.

Thanks to Christian Caine