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WHO AND HOW ARE **THE NEXT GENERATION?**

“BUT AS FOR ME AND MY
HOUSEHOLD, WE WILL SERVE
THE LORD.” (JOS. 24:15B)



ISAAC Y. CHOI (CHICAGO UBF)

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WHAT WILL BE OUR RESPONSE AND PREPARATION?

NEXT GENERATION SERIES 4

WHO AND HOW ARE THE NEXT GENERATION?

(Is the church losing the next generation?)

Chicago UBF Isaac Y. Choi

IV. WHAT WILL BE OUR RESPONSE AND PREPARATION?

The church in the west is struggling to connect with the next generation. We are dealing with the immense technological, spiritual, and social changes that define our time---the changing nature of access, new questions about authority, and increasing relational and institutional alienation. We are learning how to pass on a faith worth claiming in a new context.

How can we prepare the next generation to live meaningfully and follow Jesus wholeheartedly in these changing times?

- **The church needs to reconsider how we make disciples.**

The church is a partnership of generations fulfilling God's purpose in their time. The Christian community is one of the few places on earth where those who represent the full scope of human life, literally from the cradle to the grave, come together with a singular motive and mission. The church should be a place of racial, gender, socioeconomic, and cultural reconciliation as well as a community where various age demographics genuinely love each other and work together with unity and respect. So we are called to connect our past (traditions and elders) with our future (the next generation). Christians are members of a living organism called the church.

Young Christians are living through a period of unprecedented social, and technological change, compressed in an astounding manner, and the longer we take to acknowledge and respond to these changes, the more we allow the disconnection between generations to progress.

Ask yourself how available you have been to younger Christians. The generation gap is growing, fueled in part by technology, so it takes extra effort to be on the same page.

Frankly, deep relationship happens only by spending time together, and big chunks of it, in shared experiences. Many churches have allowed themselves to become internally segregated by age. Most began with valuable goal that their teaching be age appropriate but went on to create a systematized method of discipleship akin to the instructional model of public school. Thus many churches segregate by age-group and, in doing so, unintentionally contribute to the rising tide of alienation that defines our times.

If you lead a faith community, prioritize intergenerational relationship. For the most part, these connections won't happen by accident. You will need to catalyze them in your community and model them in your own life. The relational element is so strong because relationship is central to disciple making—and, as we've said, the dropout problem is, at its core, a disciple-making problem. God-centered relationship creates faithful, mature disciples.

- **We need to rediscover Christian calling and vocation.** But in Christian tradition, vocation is a biblically robust, directive sense of God's calling, both individual and collectively. Vocation is a clear mental picture of our role as Christ-followers in the world, of what we were put on earth to do as individuals and as a community. It is a centuries-old concept that has, for the most part, been lost in our modern expressions of Christianity.

Despite of years of church-based experiences and countless hours of Bible-centered teaching, millions of next generation Christians have no idea that their faith connects to their life's work. They have access to information, ideas, and people from around the world, but no clear vision for a life of meaning that makes sense of all that input.

God is calling the church to cultivate a larger, grander, more historic sense of our purpose as a body and as individuals.

If you are in church ministry, one metric of success might be to help young people make one or two relational connections, younger to older, that lead to significant mentoring bonds that will last for several years. These relationships would not be solely focused on spiritual growth, but should integrate the pursuit of faith with the whole of life.

What would it look like to begin measuring things like teens' and young adults' knowledge of and love for Scripture, their clarity about their gifts and vocation, their willingness to listen to the voice of God and follow his direction, the fruits of the Spirit in their lives, and the depth and quality of their love and service to others?

If you are in an older believer, become a member who connected to nurturing the faith and life of a young Christian. When you spend time with the teen or young adult whom you are mentoring, don't just talk about the Bible (though that's important).

Get together because you enjoy each other's company and friendship. Be attentive to what matters to the young adult. Help him get into right school. Offer money for tuition. Be ready to guide decisions about gap years and dating relationships. Humbly share your struggles and your wisdom. Avoid impatience and the intent to control. Help younger person find God's unique and empowering vision for his life.

If you are a parent, cultivate your own sense of vocation and calling. Your life should reverberate with the rhythms of a life in pursuit of God's presence and mission. Sadly, many young people do not have a sense of vocation because millions of Christian parents have a vision of following Jesus that avoids anything more demanding than faithful church attendance.

If you are a young person, take responsibility for your life and your future. Whether you are a prodigal, nomad, or exile—or on some other kind of

Journey—God isn't done with your story. We urge you to open your imaginative spirit to a larger, historic vision of the church, the one depicted by the writer of **Hebrews (Heb. 12:22-24)**: You are called to be a part of that assembly, empowered by the Spirit to work alongside your brothers to serve and restore God's world.

Following Jesus means finding a vocation for discovering a deep sense of vocation within the body of Christ. These practical ideas will lead your community, young and old, to see visions and dreams of the work we can do together.

- **We need to reprioritize wisdom over information as we seek to know God.**

The Christian community needs to reprioritize wisdom in order to live faithfully in a discontinuously different culture. **Submerged as we are in a society that values fairness over justice, consuming over creating, fame over accomplishment, glamour over character, image over holiness, and entertainment over discernment,** we need a blue print for what life is meant to be. **How can we live in-but-not-of life in the world that surrounds us?**

In a culture, skeptical of every kind of earthly authority, where information is dirt cheap and where institutions and leaders so often disappoint, we need God-given wisdom.

Wisdom is the spiritual, mental, and emotional ability to relate rightly to God, to others, and to our culture. We become wise as we seek Christ in the Scriptures, in the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the practices and traditions of the church, and in our service to others. As we come to know and revere God—which, according to Proverbs 9:10 in the beginning of wisdom—he will make us wise.

As we follow Christ, teach and study God's word, live in the Spirit, and practice community with the saints, we will become the kind of disciples who make disciples. Wisdom empowers us to live faithfully in a changing culture.

***What is the most urgent and serious matter to the next generation?**

Based on this next generation series, it is the incompleteness of adulthood by thirty years old. Each generation since the Boomers has taken a longer, more circuitous path to adulthood. For many reasons, some of their choosing and others not, many young adults are postponing the complete transition to adulthood. **Think about that. “Settled by thirty” used to be the normative, typical pattern for young adults in the 1960.** Now that path represents a minority of today’s young adults (77% to 46% of women, and 65% to 31% of men).

As much as anything, this cultural change bares the gap between the church and the lives of today’s next generation. Most churches and parishes are simply not prepared to minister or disciple those taking a non-traditional path to adulthood. They are most capable of guiding and helping the traditional marriage-and- career-stabilized young adult.

The incomplete adulthood brings the most serious life matters to the next generation as follow:

- **Can’t leave from the parent’s home
(or returning to parent’s home after finishing school)**
- **Incomplete higher education**
- **No financially independence**
- **Marriage problems**
- **Unable to build a family**

Helping the next generation to complete their adulthood by their thirtieth birthday might be the best way to solve their life problems as well as elevating them for next level of disciple making process.

When we come to know the characteristics of the next generation, we were overwhelmed and disheartened by our generation gap and youth culture in this rapid changing world. It is because we did not recognize and prepare for this matter beforehand. However, we can find ways through the word of God, the wisdom from above.

The Spirit-inspired interplay between generations is a common theme in Scripture. As one example, consider the story of Eli and Samuel described in **1 Samuel 3:1-18**.

In the middle of night, God calls to Samuel, but the young prophet – in-training repeatedly mistakes God’s call for the voice of his mentor, Eli. Finally it occurs to Eli, after Samuel has interrupted several times, to instruct his mentee to say, “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” We learn two strong impacts to our next generation here:

Firstly, Intergenerational relationship: Eli and Samuel represented the older generation and the next generation respectively. The younger generation needs the older generation to help them identify the voice of God, just as Samuel needed Eli to help him know God’s calling him. We have to recognize that God is speaking to the younger generation. Here, we found two instructions:

If you are younger Christian, this means it’s your turn to listen.

If you are a well-established older generation, maybe it’s time to trust in a deeper way that God is working in the next generation.

Secondly, Apprenticeship through the mentoring: Although the boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli, he did not yet know the Lord until he heard the third calling from the Lord. He came to know this fact through his mentor, Eli. It was happened while the boy Samuel was in the apprenticeship of Eli.

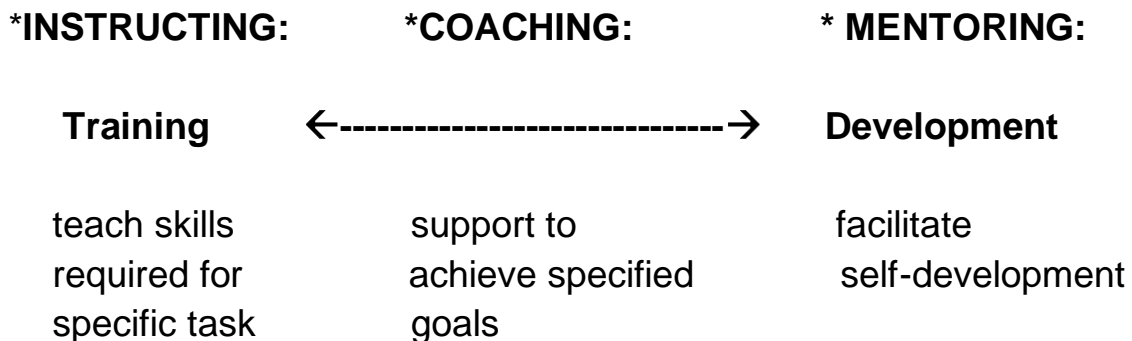
Dallas Willard in his book, **“Knowing Christ Today,”** suggests that we must connect spiritual wisdom with real-world knowledge. Also, we need to teach thru experience (events & activities), reason (reflection & application), and authority (Bible)--all are important to our apprenticeship efforts. **In a word, our faith must to connect to our practical life in the world (Jn. 17:15).**

We must rethink what it means to **“make disciples”** in a context of massive, compounded cultural change (access, alienation, and skepticism of authority). We need to change from a mass-production, public-education approach and embrace the messy adventure of relationship. **We need a new set of ideas and practices based on apprenticeship.**

***What is the mentoring?**

Many of us are familiar with a term mentoring. **Mentoring is a rich source of self-learning and personal growth. It offers you the opportunity to make a tangible difference to the success of others.** This might be to help increase their confidence of ability, or support their career success, When our enjoyment comes from the difference we make it other people, mentors becomes a living definition of the term “Win-win.”

In other word, mentoring is a distinct relationship where one person (the mentor) supports the learning, the development and progress of another person (the mentee). A mentor provides support by offering information, advice, assistance in a way that empower the mentee. As a mentor, you must be many things: role model, expert, advocator, cheerleader, enforcer and friend. Plus you must make a positive lasting difference to the knowledge, skills, and prospects of your mentee.



Christian faith is an imitative faith. It always has been. Beginning with Jesus’ earliest words to the men and women who would become his apprentices of faith, Christianity has understood itself to be a faith taught by one to another.

The life of Jesus must be seen and held as the unique model worthy of imitation for Christians. “Jesus, then is always the attractive source and challenging exemplar for Christian spirituality.”
“Follow me” may be the simplest description of Christian spirituality that exists anywhere, but the simplicity is deceptive. This simple command

assumes a complex relationship through which one becomes educated for the reign of God.

That Jesus was a teacher in a world familiar with the relationship of rabbi and disciple is well documented. That Jesus was a “disciple-maker” is also well understood. That Jesus intended a similar strategy for spiritual mentoring for the church is further enunciated in what is called “the Great Commission,” in which it is clear that all disciples are intended to become teachers of faith to the nations.

***Family discipleship**

God did not create the family simply to provide food, shelter, clothing, and companionships. The family is a spiritual institution with a spiritual purpose. **God created the family for “disciple-making, and discipleship center.**

He wants every person to be born into the ultimate discipleship **small group –a Christian family**. It is the most powerful “group” where life-change happens. Family is where we “**do life**” together. God desires the **relationships** in our families to spur one another on toward Christ.

God created the family to shape the heart of every member of the family with a deep and abiding love for Christ and for His word.

So, **the biblical purpose of parenting is to impress the hearts of children with a love for God (Dt 6:5-7)**. Therefore, God gives children to parents so that they do all in their power to impress the hearts of their children with a love for God and equip them to make a difference in the world for Christ **(Mal 2:15)**.

God’s desire is to fill the earth with worshippers of Christ **(Gen 1:28)**. The Bible teaches that a primary means of accomplishing this is those who love Him will raise their children to love Him, who in turn will raise their children to love Him down through generations **(Ps 78:5-7)**. In this way, **God created the family to advance the gospel and the Great Commission (Mt 28:19-20)**.

*** Family worship for family discipleship**

For many centuries the priority of spiritual time in the home has been called “**family worship**.” Why was family worship considered to be a big

issue? The Puritan who were the spiritual founders of America, were totally committed to the practice of family worship. Because the Puritan understood that **God's primary plan for reaching the next generation for Christ was the family and that family worship was the spiritual engine of the home.** The revival of family worship is one of the most encouraging developments modern Christianity. However, the practice is still rare. Most Christian homes are still void of anything resembling the family altar that once represented the norm among Christ followers.

Worship is not something we have to do, but it is something we want to do. If we understand what He has done for us, we cannot help but love and worship Him. It is thankful and grace-changed heart that seeks God in worship.

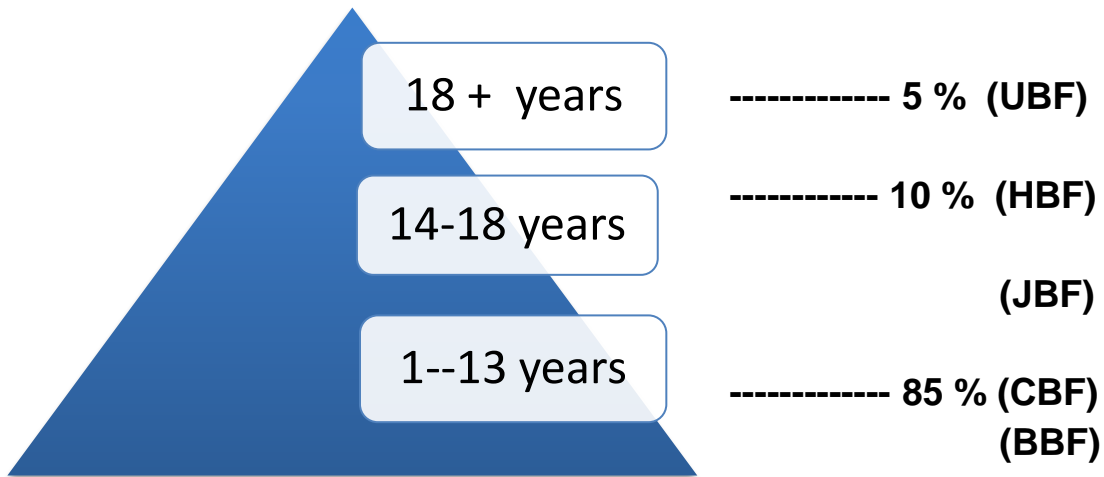
Even in the Christian families, many children grow up with no experience or impression of Christian faith and worship as a daily reality. As a result, many adolescents become nominal members with mere notional faith or abandon evangelical truth.

There are plenty of commands that in our homes to teach our children: read the Bible, pray, sing together: in essence—worship. And these commands will be hard to obey without the kind of planning and consistency that family worship helps to provide. So, family worship should commit itself to the time-proven, biblically-based mean of spiritual nurture.

God calls us to family worship for many reasons:

- **Family worship gives God the honor-- He deserves in our home.**
- **Family worship deepens and strengthens our relationships between family members.**
- **Family worship provides an opportunity for parents to take the lead in passing their faith to their children (Family discipleship).**
- **Family worship that at home brings that the spirit of worship into the church.**

***Human brain developing progress by age group (by statistics)**

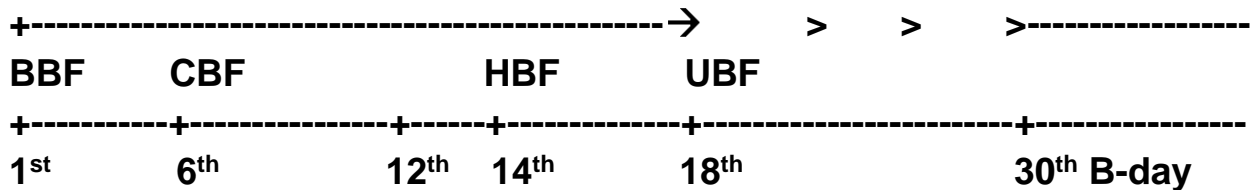


(Only 10% of all the Christians in the US became believers after age 18.)

Now, it seems to have many things to respond and prepare for the next generation:

***FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP**

(*FAMILY WORSHIP with godly parents)



BBF= Babies Bible Fellowship

HBF= High school Bible Fellowship

CBF= Children Bible Fellowship

UBF= University Bible Fellowship

JBF= Junior high Bible Fellowship

Family Discipleship = through Family worship with godly parents

To every one of you who are concerning the next generation;

“Are you willing to engage in the mentorship for the next generation?”

***One word: Godly families make a strong church.**

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