

When I was finishing up high school and going into college, I was trying to decide what I wanted to study. And at that point in my life, I was like, I want to become a math teacher.

Math has always been my favorite subject and kids. Working with kids is something that I love to do. So when I started my. College journey, I was on track to become. A teacher. And what I was. Most excited to teach was math because that was always my favorite and I was connected with it.

And so just this spring. I got the chance to sub. Three Friday afternoons in April in different. Classes, and one of the days I was in a second grade classroom. The day started a little bit rough. The my hallway movement of the kids from lunch to science, they got a little rowdy, not too bad, but you could tell it was a little more than the school was used to. And then at recess, there was an incident where that was it was just an incident.

So my day was. Starting off. A little rough, but then it was time for math. So I was like, this is my time. Like, it's time to teach math. And so I had. Looked over all the curriculum and we were taking three digit numbers and subtracting other three digit numbers from them. And so I put four demonstration problems on the board.

And then the Class had already been learning it. And so I was like, Hey, let's. Go for this first one. And so you take one column and you subtract it and then you. Get your answer. But every once in a. While you have to borrow from the column next to the. Hundreds column or the 10th column or whatever, and they call that a grouping. Now, I learned that that day, but it's called a grouping. So we're, we're jiving.

Like me. And the class or jive, and. I'm like, OK, nine  $-7$ , somebody help me out. Two OK and six  $-8$ . OK, we're going to have to borrow from the other column. And then we're going to carry a one. OK, what's this answer? And so we solve the four. Problems and I'm like, OK, now it's. Time for partner power. Is what they call it. I'm like, now it's. Time for you to work on. These same type of problems. Together with the person at your desk. And work on your worksheet and then bring it. Up to me to check it.

And then at that point. A girl came up to the Desk. Everybody's working. Came up to me, and she was like, Hey, I noticed on the second. Problem on the board. We made a mistake. And she pointed out to me, I looked up and I was like, Oh, really good. I So I called the classes attention back. I was like, Hey, just so you know, I said her name. I said she brought something to my attention. We had made a mistake.

On this problem. So I raised it and I put the right answer. I was like. That was so good. I heard a catch keep Working on This. And then just a few seconds later.

Another kid raises their hand and they're. Like, Actually, we had. Done that problem, right Because of this I looked back up at the problem and I'm like, Actually, we. Had done it right the first time. Cyrus it again and I put the. First answer that we had the right answer. And at that.

Point, one of the second graders said, Do you even know math? And the worst part was it was not mean at all. It was just innocent. Second grader, like curiously. Wondering like, did we get a guy who had no idea what he is doing here today?

It reminded me of an email that a parent sent to Liz Troyer a little while ago, actually, like. Ten years ago. And I was I was tagged on it and the the email said, just thought I would share something. And this is to our children's ministry. Just thought I would share something. Cute and Funny for my Son's. First day of Kindergarten, his teacher asked the class why numbers were important. He raised his hand, and When his teacher called on Him, his response was Numbers are important because they are important to God. Kudos to teaching my children the important things in life. So numbers are important to God, and that is why they're important.

But today we're going to be talking About the next. Generation and Teaching The next generation and Hopefully passing on good things to the next generation.

My name is Derek Stein, Oscar, and I'm the director of Family Ministries here at Horizons.

And we are in this kind of Weird two week period where we don't have a senior pastor. We've had Pastor Jason Kennedy for the last ten years serving Us and doing amazing things. And next week Pastor Ashley Crawford, who's a member here. Is going to share the message, and then in two weeks. Will receive our new senior pastor, Mandy Barkhaus.

But a lot of times when A pastor Transitions the unfortunate thing that can happen is People in their congregations, faith can kind of transition As well and unfortunately Sometimes that means people in the congregation. Lose their faith. Right. We see this all the time.

Our pastor transition Is completely a normal. Thing in our denomination. It's just like with the denomination feels God's leading. They'll move pastors to different. Locations and use their. Gifts to serve other congregations. So Jason's moving on in completely good terms. But you see in the news a lot.

Some churches are really centered on a pastor's personality, right? Like all of their church is centered on the personality of the pastor. Then unfortunately. What you see in the news quite a bit is. That a pastor will fall, will have a moral failure. The it seems like a lot of. Times cover it up. And then it gets uncovered and it ends up. Hurting not just the people they hurt originally. But it ends. Up hurting the entire congregation. And you watch as people lose their faith all hinged to one person. It seems like one pastor can impact. Hundreds and hundreds. Of people's. Faith. Right.

But the last thing Pastor Jason would want for us as a church is for any of us to have to go into a season of losing. Faith. Right. Well, he's starting his new ministry in Omaha. The last thing he would want is for any of us to somehow disconnect from the church. Right.

So and same with Pastor. Mandy and her congregation that she's served the last ten years. They just. Hope that the ministry that they've impacted for a long time will. Continue to grow and thrive in the ministry that the move to will be able to grow and thrive. and so sometimes I think one of the things we do wrong. Is we put a little too much emphasis on the pastor being called and not enough emphasis on the fact that each of us are also called.

And so today we're going to dive into a passage that was recommended to me by both Pastor Jason and Pastor Ashley, who's preaching next week.

In 1 Kings. We're picking up mid story here and God is talking to Elijah. It doesn't say that in this verse, but It says the Lord said to him, the Lord said to Elijah, Go back the way you came and go to the desert of Damascus when you get there. Anoint Hazael King over him. Also anoint Jay, who's son of named Xi King over Israel and anoint Elijah son of chef. And it looks like it looks like Snapchat. Elijah, son of Shabbat from Abel mellow seed to succeed you as prophet and so on one side is the succession of kings that Elijah is helping to name.

And on the other side is who will succeed Elijah as prophet, which is Elijah. It's confusing because their names are so close, but Elijah is the mentor the current prophet. And he's naming Elijah to succeed him. And so just as God would name the next Kings, he also would name. The next prophet because God was not going to leave himself without a witness in any Generation. Picking up in Kings 19 verse 19 so Elijah went there and found a license and a chauffeur, and he was plowing with 12 yoke of oxen, and he. Himself was driving the 12th pair.

Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. That's going to be really relevant. We'll circle back to that in just a second. But Elijah went up to him and Threw his cloak around him. Elijah then left his oxen and ran after.

Elijah let me kiss my mother and father goodbye. He said, and then I will come with you go back, Elijah replied. What have I done for you? So Elijah left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the Plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people in the air. Then he set out to follow Elijah and become his servant.

So first. The cloak that Elijah. Threw around and set around Elijah. In the Old Testament. The Spirit of God most often. Appeared as a spirit, the empowered, enabled prophecy. That's just the Spirit of God was what Empowered Prophecy and prophets.

And many passages associate the gift of prophecy with possessing the Spirit of God. And then one of the ways that the writers of The Old Testament would show that the Spirit of God was on somebody was to say That the Spirit Clothed them, the spirit was clothing this person. And so it was extremely relevant. When Elijah took his actual clothing, his cloak and put it on Elijah, that was saying the spirit that has been on me.

A prophet is going to be on you. And so then Elijah is standing behind 12 pair of oxen, which means he came from a wealthy family. He was probably a prominent figure, and he had a decision to make. Was he going to leave that to follow Elijah? And it wasn't really a decision between him and Elijah as much as it was a decision between him and God. What was he going to do and so then he did what the writer of Hebrews would later urge the entire church to do. He set aside he threw aside everything that might hinder and entangle him. So he took his plowing equipment and he used it to start a fire and he threw a feast for the people because there was a new race to run.

There's a new field to plow. There would be no holding of the new life in one hand and the old life in the other hand. Jesus actually talked about this story when Jesus was here years and years and years later, Jesus would refer back to this. And certainly when Jesus referred back to this, all of the people who were listening to him that came from a Jewish background would have known that He was talking about this story. When Jesus said, Jesus replied, No, one who puts his hand on the plow and looks back is fit.

For service.

In the Kingdom of God. The cost of following God is the same in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament. It's to be single minded, to follow God means to follow God. It doesn't mean to do it sometimes and do other things sometimes. To follow God means to follow him doesn't mean you can't have.

Another career most of the time. It does mean you do have another career. But it does mean your primary calling in life is to follow God. And your secondary calling is your career. And so in your secondary calling, whatever your career may be, your primary calling will influence the way that you love people and the way your character impacts how you interact.

I'm going to pick up the story in 2 Kings 2

We're fast forwarding just a little bit, but it's the same story. Second Kings to one when the Lord was about to take up to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, which we could fact we could just keep reading through that. But that's how Elijah would go Up to Heaven is in a whirlwind.

When the Lord was about to take Eliza up to heaven in a whirlwind Elijah and Eliza were on their way from Gilgo Eliza said to Eliza, Stay here. The Lord has sent me to Bethel. But Eliza said, As surely as the Lord lives, and as you live I will not leave you. So they went down to Bethel. They spent a lot of time together.

They're traveling together now. They Eliza spent a lot of time with Eliza. And if we want to impact and influence the next generation after us, we need to spend a lot of time with them. There's a there's a place

called Fuller Youth Institute that kind of studies youth ministry and churches and things like that. And one of the concepts that they've had in some of their books is this concept called Key Chain Leadership. And Key Chain Leadership is basically for the church. What unfortunately happens in a lot of churches is they have a congregation.

And slowly that congregation gets older and and the sad thing is that congregation really doesn't pass their church off to another generation. They just kind of get older and then eventually shut their doors. Right and so Fuller Youth Institute says we need key chain leadership. Like.

How are we empowering the next generation to become the leaders in our church? How are we passing over decision making power and leadership voice and leadership opportunities from one generation to the next? And they actually also mean how are we passing the keys to the church from one generation to the next so that the next generation owns and runs the church.

And so in this article that they posted just last month, it was titled Key Chain leaders Start with relationships and it's by Andy Junge. And it he says, We all want to be seen and known. Youth and young adults are no different. They want others to know the gifts they possess and the passion they have for issues that are important to them. The only way we can get to know their gifts and passions is to develop an authentic relations with them. I love this next part. Trust must be built. No strings attached, no bait and switch, no agendas, just an authentic desire to know them as God's sons And daughters.

When we get to know young people we learn about their gifts and passions, and it's the role of a key chain leader to open doors so that they can use their gifts and passions for God's kingdom. If we want to do that, it's going to take spending a lot of time together with the next generation.

Elijah spent a lot of time with Elijah picking up in second Kings to first seven 50 man from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elijah had stopped at the Jordan.

Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it again. His cloak Super, super relevant and important laser took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed on dry ground when they had crossed.

Elijah said to Elijah, Tell me what can I do for you before I am taken from you? Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit Elijah replied, This is all happening at the Jordan River, where Jesus would later be baptized, and in ancient Canin, the river and the sea were rivals.

To the God Bell, but to God to Yahweh. They were nothing right. God could overcome the river in the sea and split. So then Eliza asks Elijah for a

double portion of his spirit right. So he's basically asking, Can I inherit what you have? Can I be a son of yours?

Can I carry on your legacy? I want what you have is what Elijah says

And to summarize what happens next, Elijah is taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elijah then picks up his cloak. Elisha's cloak strikes the water with it again, and the water divides again in the 50 people standing around where like I think the spirit that was resting on Elijah is now on the yeah, I think he has that same spirit. And then the 50 people asked, Should we go look for Elijah? We saw him taken up in a whirlwind Maybe God sent him down in the mountains over there and Eliza was like, No, God didn't set him down in the mountains over there

He's gone and they asked again, Should we go look for him though? What if he's over there? And Elijah's like, No, nope. And they asked again. And Alex was like, Fine, go.

Look for him. They were gone for a while. They came back and they said we couldn't find him in. Elijah was like, Didn't I tell you shouldn't go?

Right.

But it was a license time. Like it was Eliza's time to lead and be the Prophet. Elijah was gone. So want to talk about two things from this story today. One thing that we can't take away from this story we shouldn't take away from the story, and then one thing we can take away from it. And so the thing we can't take away from this is that it's only the leaders job to pass down their faith to the next generation.

We can't take away that. It's only the leaders job to pass down their faith to the next generation. Like it's only Jason's job to pass the church on to Mandy. Jason did a lot to prepare and get things organized and ready so Mandy can be successful. It's only his job to make sure the faith is passed down to the next generation. We can't take that away. And I'll take you through a couple of quick things to kind of emphasize that point.

First is another prophet Long before long before this Moses was his name, said this. This is something Moses said. He said, I would say that all of the Lord's people were prophets and the Lord would put his spirit on them because Moses was a prophet.

And He was leading people who weren't. And he's like, I wish God's spirit was on all these people. And then a thousand, a thousand years later. So another prophet named Joel said, and it shall come to pass afterward.

I will pour my spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy and it still hadn't happened yet. When Joel said, This is going to happen, it hadn't happened yet, but it would happen.

More and more years later and Pentecost is when it did happen when the Spirit of God fell on the church and on all people. Everyone was acting a little squirrely at first. And I love how Peter describes.

It in the book. In the Book of Acts Peter says, these people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning, like everybody's like, I guess that makes sense. He says, No, this is what was spoken.

By the Prophet Joel in the last days. God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people. And at that point it did happen. God's spirit was on all people. And so the Spirit was poured out on all. And Christians have been given the same function.

As a prophet now to bear witness to God in their generation so we to wear the prophets cloak we are to witness to God in our generation and we are to pass that on to the next generation horizons.

This is part of the Methodist Church. And together with Nebraska and Kansas, we have a conference. There's like a thousand churches in it. Every year. All the pastors gather as.

Well as a Non clergy member from each church. They gather for an annual conference which just happened two weeks ago up in Omaha and one of the traditions that happens every year at that annual conference is the oldest retired pastor will take a stool and pass it on to the youngest newly ordained pastor, which is super representative of God.

Continuing ministry from one generation to another the oldest Retired pastor passing a stool to the youngest newly ordained pastor. But I love these words that the Reverend Jesse Robbie fall posted leading up to the annual conference in Nebraska this year. He said, Every time I encounter 2 Kings 2:7-14 Which is what we just read, part of my mind goes to that ritual which speaks the truth. We often forget while the conference ritual is about the literal passing of set aside ministry from one generation to another, it seems to me that there is all that is also about the work of the whole church.

Each of us whether clergy or lay, is responsible for the daily practice of our faith and for the passing of our faith to another generation. Just as Elijah guided Elijah into the work of a prophet of God.

Each of us knows at least one person we can mentor in faith. We can be mentors and guides to those new to the Christian faith and those farther along in the walk. Then they in turn will be mentors and guides to yet another generation.

I like how he closes, he says. This is how the faith is perpetuated not just through preaching one day a week, but through day to day examples of discipleship that we see in the lives of our mentors. Passing the mantle is the work of the church for all of us not just for clergy

So it's no Longer just profit. To profit passing down the faith. It's all of us passing down our faith.

To everyone in the next generation so what we can't take away from this story.

Is that it's. Only the leader's job to pass down their faith to the next generation. So what can we take away and we we can. And we should take away a question that we should all ask ourselves. That question. Is, are you living in a way that the generation after you would want to inherit your faith?

Just a month or two ago, ten, 11 news posted on Facebook and the title of the article was Americans are going to Church less Poor Finds. And then the text read according to a poll from Gallup, membership to houses of worship continued to decline last year and drop below 50% for the first time in Gallup's eight decade. Trends right a lot of times it seems like the next generation is not real interested in our faith, but a reminder that God is always going to give himself a witness and each generation to him.

And so I'm encouraged by that blog from Fuller Youth Institute that encouraged all of us to say if we want to impact the next Generation. Trust must be built. No strings attached. Nobody can switch, no agendas. We just need to have an authentic desire to get to know them as God's sons and daughters. Charles Spurgeon would say it like this. He'd say, The Church needs young blood in its veins.

Our strength for holding the faith may lie in experienced saints but our zeal for propagating it must be found in the young.

This past March, we went down to Kansas City on the fusion retreat and I got the chance, Helen, I got the chance to share. And I remember when I was sharing during a during like a gathering or like a church service that we had with the fifth or eighth graders I was talking about how I have stresses and worries and sometimes they impact me during the day. But a lot of times at night when I'm trying to go to bed, like they'll come to mind and then I'll have a hard time falling asleep because I'm thinking about them.

And I was going to keep moving on to my other point but I remember looking out over the fifth through eighth graders and seeing, like, way more of them nod than I was expecting. Like, I have that, too. And in that moment, I was so thankful for the dozen or so adults who had taken a weekend away from what they were doing to spend time with them, get to know them, and build trust with them. Over that weekend or just a week and a half, we were at Youth Front Camp with our fifth or seventh graders, and every night there's a church service.

They call it a gathering and we crammed 230 people in a room a little smaller than this to worship Horizons brought 20 of the campers, but there's 230 campers there that week.

And we sing with a band and then there's a speaker. And that night the speaker had shared about her insecurities. And, and what she was going through and how Jesus connected with her insecurities and at the end of the service she invited and they do this a lot at camp. She invited the students to go to the back of the room. There's three whiteboards in the back of the room.



And right up there in insecurities. There was a prompt that said, I feel dot, dot, dot. And then there were just a bunch of whiteboard marker and to be honest, this time is always a little chaotic. You go from a speaker like this and you tell a roomful of 240 fifth through seventh graders to go back and do this activity any time over the next two songs, go back and write something up.

And honestly when the first song starts, all 240 of them cram to the back as fast as I can, and it's like metal folding chairs and they're clinking around and you can hardly hear the worship song. And so I'm always like, like, I wish they wouldn't do this. But as we're leaving this session, to go back to discussions that night.

One of my friends was at Camp that week and he took a picture of all three of the whiteboards and he texted them to me and that night when I was going to bed, I zoomed in on all the different things that the kids said, and they said things like, I feel out of place and I feel anxious almost all of the time.

I feel never good enough in sports. I feel stressed. I feel too short. Weak fat left out. I feel not smart. I feel too skinny. I feel alone. And ugly. I feel I'm not good enough for this world God created. I feel too smart. I feel like a waste of space, sad and ugly. I feel like no one cares. About me and like I'm nothing. I feel left out and scared. I feel not worth it or pretty. I feel unwanted. I feel embarrassed, broken, angry. Worried like I'm not doing. Anything right I feel nothing I ever do is good enough for my parents feel weird and too crazy and like no one actually likes me.

So all the time people will ask me, like, since I work with children and youth ministry here, they'll say, do you need someone to like? Do you need someone to serve children's ministry or youth ministry? Do you need me? And I think most of the time they're asking me like, Do you need me this Sunday?

Like, we'll be OK if I go on vacation or my family has something. And I'm always like, Yeah, I know that's important. Like, you're fine to be gone when you need to be gone. But every once in a while I wonder if somebody is asking me like, Do kids and youth today need me?

And my answer would always be yes, they need someone who's gone through this to walk beside them and say, I've been through that too, and this is how I held on to Jesus. So today as you came in, you got a card, and if you'd like to be involved in children or youth ministries here, we would love to have you.

It's not really about a ratio of having one adult to four kids. It's about having adults. Who care about what they're going through and if serving and children are youth ministry.

Here isn't your thing, I would encourage you to get involved somewhere. Teammates is a great organization listening more to your own kids and grandkids or neighbors or your friend's kids.

Because my guess is someone or multiple someones did this for you. Just last month we were celebrating confirmation Sunday here with our eighth graders sharing their faith stories, and it's one of my favorite Sundays here you hear them get to share how they've grown in their faith. And I remember I was sitting right back here on this side of the room with our first two fourth graders. We brought them into lesson, which was a ton of fun. They're leaning up in their chairs like peeking up like are they going to dunk them in water and asking all these questions, curious.

Questions and we're sitting there and we listened to Tayla's story and our Kristi is teaching that day, and she's taught in that in the third and fourth grader and for a long time. And she leans to me after Tayla's story, and she's like, she's grown so much.

Like there's all these first two fourth graders sitting next to us. And Kristi can remember when she was one of those kids at that age. And then she hears her say those words in her testimony and she's like, she's grown so much but I was thankful that Kristi could hear that and be part of that and that so many people.

Were part of that for Tayla. But, you know, my favorite part of this story.

Is that the week before, I was standing back there in the hall, and I and Noah, who's two, and Olivia who's four, came into the kids hallway, and they saw Tayla, and they said Tayla ran up, give her a big hug, because what Noah and Olivia love about church, one of the things they love about church here is Tayla. That's what they love. So God will be faithful to provide a witness to him in each generation. We know that.

Today is a reminder that each of us are called to it. Maybe that takes a little bit of pressure off the pastor transition. Right. We don't need to put quite so much pressure on the fact that we have a new pastor coming because all of us are called to this. All of us have an important role to play. So to close the service today, I'm thankful to Clint Pulver and his team who allow us to play this story.

We know we have a God who understands us. We have a God who loves us and who believes in us. I hope we can be a part of telling the next generation about him. Let's pray God. Thank you. As I look out over this room for the people who have done this for kids and for youth for years, who have made sacrifices in their family schedule or their personal schedule to impact somebodys lives, besides their own so thankful to be a part of a church like that. And we just we just want to keep doing that just a reminder to us that we're all called to this. That we're all part of this mission that you've given horizons.

How do you pray for these coming weeks? God, that we can just make an impact, that we can welcome people through these doors that haven't been here yet. We come out and Pastor Randy in a big way that we can take some part of our faith, pass it on to the next generation. AMEN.