

From One Generation

Grow Up, Show Up, Move Over

By Pastor Mandy Barkhaus

When I was young, my older siblings would go off to school, and I would get to hang out with my mom and dad. They owned the bowling alley at the time, or I would get to hang out with my best friend. Now, my best friend was a man in his eighties named Mr. Davis, and Mr. Davis was a widower and my next-door neighbor and we would hang out in his yard and we would work in his flower beds. We'd go and work in his garage. He had a workshop. He'd let me turn the vise on his workbench, which was a lot of fun. He gave me these little tiny glasses of soda, and he'd give me Tootsie Rolls. Occasionally, together, we would eat sugar snaps cereal.

Now, sometimes, when my sisters were home from school, they would come along with me. We would get to go up into his attic, where his late wife had boxes and boxes of artificial flowers. We'd make different arrangements and sometimes pretend we were getting married and all those things. Now, Mr. Davis, he also he played the accordion, the chicken dance and other songs, and I was fascinated by the accordion. I still love the accordion today because of Mr. Davis.

We moved away from Mr. Davis when I was still pretty young, though. I returned and visited him a couple of times before he passed away. I actually just so happened to find this card from Mr. Davis in a drawer that I was cleaning out this week. You know, just to prove that he was my best friend and not my siblings' best friend, it's addressed to Mandy.

Hi, Mandy. And then blah, blah, blah. And then tell Carrie, Amy, and Jason about it. Those are my siblings. Tell them hi. Right. So he was my best friend, and I think I was his best friend too. I wish that I could sit down with him today because even though I was really, really young when we were best friends, I knew that Mr. Davis was patient and wise. I am sure that Mr. Davis could teach me so many more things today about faith and love and happiness and grief and all the things of life. And I can tell you many more stories of many other people who mentored me when I was young, who walked with me on my journey as a follower of Jesus, who taught me to be a good, kind person.

However, I know that not everyone had the same opportunity to have so many incredible mentors and role models as a child as I did, And I hope now that I'm an adult, I hope that I am. I can be a mentor to the younger generation. I served as the youth director for many, many years, and I loved my time with the middle schoolers and high schoolers.

I'm a teammates mentor and that's after Coach. Dr. Tom Osborne came and gave the message last year and invited us to consider to be a teammate and me and a few others of you said, yes, we were ready, and we were matched this year, and we joined a whole bunch of other people who were already teammates, mentors, which is just an incredible program.

Then, we heard from Brad and the campus foster care, who invited us to think about the children in our community and what God might be calling us to do. But then the question becomes, well, why does it matter that we care for children beyond our own children if we have them? But I'm talking about why it matters that we care about the children of the world, and we can read Jesus's words found in Matthew chapter 19, where Jesus says, Allow the children to come to me.

Don't forbid them because the kingdom of heaven belongs to people like these children. Now, that's a pretty powerful statement that Jesus is saying to us: we need to think about the children. We need to prepare the next generation for leadership in the church because it's for them. Now, Joshua, a prophet that we read about in the Old Testament, Joshua was a next-generation leader.

Before he was a leader, Moses was the leader of the Israelites, and Moses noticed Joshua. Joshua was one of the spies, one of the 12 spies sent out to scope out this promised land. And Joshua and Caleb came back. They were the only two who had a favorable report, a good report about this promised land. Like everybody else, they were frightened by what they saw.

Moses saw something in Joshua and began to prepare him to take over. Joshua was there when Moses received the Ten Commandments. Joshua was there when Moses met God at the tent of the meeting; Moses prepared Joshua for leadership. Moses did all he could do to put himself out of a job. When Moses handed over the leadership to Joshua, it was Joshua who led the Israelites into the Promised Land.

Then Joshua did great things. Joshua conquered Jericho. He loved and obeyed God. He made a few mistakes along the way. But all in all, Joshua was a really good leader for the Israelites, except for one important lesson here. It is found in Judges Chapter Two, verses eight through 13. Joshua Nun's Son and the Lord's servant died when he was 110 years old.

They buried him within the boundaries of his family property in Timnath-heres in the Highlands of Ephraim, north of Mount Gash. When the whole generation had passed away, another generation came after them who didn't know the Lord or the things that he had done for Israel. Then, the Israelites did things that the Lord saw as evil. They served the

Baals, and they went away from the Lord, their ancestor's God, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt.

They went after other gods from among the surrounding peoples. They worshiped them, and they angered the Lord. They went away from the Lord and served Baal and the Astartes. Now, here's what Joshua did or didn't do. Joshua forgot to prepare the next generation, and when he and the rest of the generation died, the next generation didn't know God.

They didn't know God. They began to serve the Canaanite gods and goddesses a star. This was the God, the goddess of love and sex and war. So this next generation, they're a little intrigued by these gods and goddesses, these gods and goddesses that the Canaanites served were the gods of the cosmos. You have to remember they're in this new land, and they're in this land where they need the land. So they need to protect their land.

They have crops, and they need rain for those crops to grow. Tandhe Canaanites were like, we'll just worship these gods, and you will have all of these things. So they moved toward these gods and goddesses and away from the God of Israel. But does this sound kind of familiar today? Because in movies or just in life in general, being spiritual is okay.

Connecting to the God of the universe or the God of nature is acceptable. Like people, both Christians and non-Christians. We can all relate to that. We do worship the God of the universe. But what about the one true God Joshua is saying? Now we get to say, Well, what about Jesus?

How are we doing at pointing people to Jesus so that the next generations? Well, we won't forget now that if we continue reading Judges and the rest of the Old Testament, you will find that God uses leaders, or deliverers that are old and that are young and that are men and that are women were used a leader who was handicapped, and God even used a Canaanite. A Shamgar, who was a Canaanite, did not worship the of Israel, but God still used Shamgar as a servant to help deliver Israel. God uses people in our world today who may not call themselves Christians now, people who are doing really good things in our world. There are some young people in our world who are doing really good things, who are standing up for injustices in our world.

A few weeks ago we had a panel here and we had the CEO and president of the Food Bank of Lincoln here, and we had the managing attorney for the Lincoln Tenant Assistance Program and during their conversation here, they were talking about the power of the youth, voice of the young people voice, and they were talking about the summer funding, the summer food program, the program. The governor said he changed his mind and agreed to fund this program because the young people stood up and said this is important.

Thousands of kids will be able to eat this summer because of this program. The young people stepped up and showed the importance of loving their neighbors through this basic need of giving food to the young people, young people, which I don't know if they were Christians or not, but they're young people, and they're helping other young people.

Now we are in this sermon series about our mission statement, and I've kind of made it into like three different chunks. The first one was about growing up. We're going to grow up in a community, we're going to grow up maturing as disciples. Then the second part was about showing up. We are going to show up to lead all people to Jesus for the transformation of the world, right? We need to do the work in order to have that happen.

Now, in the third part, I labeled Move Over because we're talking about where we're growing in a community. We're maturing as disciples. We're leading all to Jesus for the transformation of the world from one generation to the next. But we can't move over just yet. We can't move over just because we don't understand young people.

We can't just say, all right, well, I'm going to ignore what is happening over there or over there or wherever, because I don't get it. Some people in the older generations even say sometimes this generation that's coming up is a lost cause. We cannot move over until we've done our job to prepare through mentoring, through the teammates program, through teaching and or Fusion or Arise.

Being a foster parent, giving a child a home, simply listening to the youth in what they're passionate about, teaching about the love of Jesus whenever we get a chance. Now Moses, we find these words in Deuteronomy and Moses is saying, first of all, before this passage, he's saying here's the commands that I'm giving you love the Lord your God, and with all your heart and with all your being.

Starting at verse 18 in Deuteronomy 11, it says, place these words. I'm speaking on your heart and in your very being. Tie them on your hand. It's a sign. They should be on your forehead as a symbol. Teach them to your children by talking about them. When you are sitting around your house and when you are out and out and about, when you are lying down, and when you are getting up.

Now, there is this good news of Jesus that so too often we are all guilty of being too quiet about. I would say, almost always, we are not bold enough when we are not sharing the good news as we should. Now there is this thing where the point of foster care or the point of teammates or some of these other mentoring programs like the point is not to proselytize these children.

The point of foster care teammates is not to make them a Christian and in fact, I could argue that it may do more harm than good, especially if children come from a different faith tradition in their home.

But what I'm saying is that we can share our story of how we relate to Jesus and even more, more so we can share with the children the love and the forgiveness and the grace that comes from Jesus. We can show that to a child and that those acts may change a child's life forever, like the seeds that we plant now. We may never know how the Holy Spirit will work to change someone's life.

Last weekend we had an endowment luncheon and I was on vacation, so I was unable to attend. But Chris McInerney shared his testimony and I heard from a few people that it was a really powerful testimony. Someday, I will have him share with everyone. But basically, he was talking about how important horizons were to him and his family. Then, just a week before that, his daughter, Riley, who's 19, not only attended the Fusion retreat that Emma was talking about earlier but actually taught one of the sessions during the middle school retreat. How cool is that? Chris and his wife, Heidi, have created this environment in their home and through their church, through being involved here at Horizons, and they have passed this down to their children.

Now, what we need to know is a few things. If we want to make this happen over and over again. First of all, we need to know the basics. We need to know the basics of God. Jesus did for us on the cross and what Jesus is asking us to do. Then we need to add that to a relational environment, we have to be making relationships with one another, with different generations coming together to build these relationships. Then, if we add that to a reproductive process, we will have an infinite number of disciples, and that's a process that we're working on here every step of the way.

When we're thinking about our discipleship system and to be a disciple of Jesus, it means more than just Sunday morning, and how can we make this happen? How can we create opportunities where people can get together build relationships?

Understanding the basics, what it means to love Jesus? Because then we will have an infinite number of disciples. Now, there are two questions that everyone asks in life, but I think, especially young people, they want to know who am I, and they want to know, where do I belong.

Now, I think that these questions are true for all of us, and as we age, we learn more about who we are. I think that. But in between my thirties and my forties, I grew so much during that time, and I'm excited to see where the rest of my forties are going to take me, as well as my fifties and sixties and so on.

When we build these relationships with one another, we will discover who we are and maybe help somebody else discover who they are. Then the second question is, where do I belong? Everyone wants to know that they have someplace to belong, and that's what Josh and Elizabeth said

They want the children to know that they have a place in their home, no matter how long or short they stay. They want those children to know that they have a place in their home where they belong, which is part of our values.

We believe that everyone has a place at the table and that everyone is welcome to this place, and this is where we build relationships. Now, if the people before us didn't ever give the next generation a chance like then where would we be?

I remember so very clearly Youth Sunday when I was in eighth grade when I got to stand up on stage and read something that I wrote something about my faith. I was nervous, and I was scared. I left that day and I said, I will never do that again and, of course, the Holy Spirit had something different in mind. But someone gave me a chance.

If you are in the older generation, whatever that means to you, don't lose hope. Don't give up hope for the next generation. Your job is not over. Just quite yet. Moses did all he could to put himself out of a job. If you are a current leader serving in any way in the church, begin training somebody, begin inviting somebody to walk alongside you, and take over for your leadership. If you're in the younger generation, whatever that means to you, and maybe it's that you raise your hand and say, I want to be a leader. I want to make a difference in my church. I want to make a difference in my world. I want to be a part of the kingdom of heaven that Jesus is talking about, the one that has no more pain, and no more suffering, and no more tears. I want to be a part of that world.

Now, to answer those two questions, Who am I, and where do I belong? We are the children of God. We are the people that the Kingdom of Heaven was made for. We are loved by God just exactly as we are, and that Jesus died on the cross for each of us. Where do we belong? Well, we belong in a community with one another, supporting one another from one generation to the next. We will continue to do life and ministry together. Amen.

Let's pray. Good, gracious, and holy God, you have shown us so many times how you love us, how you sent your son Jesus to die on the cross for us, and in some ways, God, we have failed to prepare that next generation. I pray that we will be bold in not only believing in the love of Jesus but also in the strength and hope that you have for us in this world.

I pray that you would show us the kingdom of heaven—just a glimpse of that every time we see a child, you know, in a home that's being loved. We pray for people who are in difficult

situations, whatever it is, God, where maybe their children are being hurt or in danger. God, show us where we can step up in this community to lead the next generation. I say this in Jesus' name, Amen.