

### Overview

Throughout Scriptures, we see a consistent theme that the next generation is a priority to God, modeled most specifically when Jesus comes to earth and initiates his redemptive mission by inviting a handful of teenagers into his circle and invests in them for three years. We all need people in our life modeling to us what it looks like to follow Jesus faithfully for life and pave the way for the next generation as they continue to have people following after them.

We have been looking at the theme of Exile over the past couple of series, and the Bible certainly implements this theme often when referring to the people of God. Our vertical belief system is at odds with the horizontal values of the culture around us. We live in this world but belong to a different one. As we've studied Daniel and his friends as exiles in Babylon we have become familiar with the idea that Babylon was a kingdom whose values were opposed to God's desired way of living and therefore throughout Scriptures the term "Babylon" becomes an archetype to describe any powerful nation or culture whose values are opposite God's.

Today's 'next generation' lives in a digital Babylon. It is not a physical place, but very real in its sway and allure. How can we as God's people recognize this new culture at large which is influencing so many children and teenagers and how can we help influence them to make disciples who are able to remain faithful to God even in the midst of such a force?

**Big Idea:** Investing in the Next Generation is a priority to God and therefore, should be a priority for all of His people.

Two main thoughts about the Next Generation in Digital Babylon:

#### 1. Screens are discipling the next generation.

- The average teenager between the ages of 15-23 spends almost 3,000 hours a year on screen time.
- The same demographic will intake only 300 hours of spiritual content in that same year.

So what do we do? *We introduce the next generation to a true experience with the person of Jesus, leading to deep intimacy and trust in him.*

How?

- We experience Jesus together
- Navigate the true north of Jesus (not a brand, but a person)
- We fearlessly ask the big questions of life
- Don't rush a decision to follow Jesus
- Get close and stay close to Jesus
- Go to church, but that alone doesn't transform

#### 2. There is an epidemic of loneliness among the next generation.

- Digital relationships have become normal, and therefore we avoid the hard work of being human
- We question the meaning of life and our purpose in it
- Individualism is at an all-time high and thus "discipleship" is becoming a solo effort

So what do we do? *We catch the vision that investing in the next generation rests on the shoulders of the entire body of believers, and we develop multi-generational relationships where trust, vulnerability, wisdom, training are being practiced.*

Discipleship happens within three feet (arm's length) over long periods of time. Coming to church alone does not make disciples. Claiming the right beliefs does not lead to transformation. God has designed his kingdom in this way: people invest in people. Jesus modeled it and then asked us to do it. It requires time, attention, energy, sacrifice, and heart. It may mean opening up your home, shifting your schedule, or beginning to prioritize different things. It's rarely convenient. However, the outcome is that your relational investment may have further expanded the Kingdom of God and created a lasting and permanent impact on the lives of the next generation. And what could be a more worthwhile legacy than that?

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Discussion Starters:

1. What stuck out to you from Matt's message today? What do you remember?
2. Where do you see the theme of "God prioritizing the next generation in Scripture?"
3. Did you have a spiritual influencer in your life growing up? Either way, describe how the presence of one or lack thereof was a shaping factor in your spiritual journey.
4. How do we see Jesus model investing in the next generation?
5. Who are you currently pouring into and shaping spiritually? If you're not currently, what would it look like for you to begin?
6. What would you want to see happen among the next generation? How can you be a part of fostering that?
7. Would you please take the time to pray for the next generation right here and now?