

MBC - 2/2/2020 - Pastor Doug Thompson
 SERIES: 20/20 VISION FOR MBC - PT.4
"Looking Forward"
 2 Timothy 2:1-2

God willing, we will return to our study in Acts next Lord's Day. We've taken some time to re-focus on our priorities as a church and this morning we finish with our fourth priority as a church. In some ways, it's the most important priority of all for our survival.

So turn with me in your Bibles to Judges ch.2. After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, Moses brought the people of Israel to the border of the Promised Land, and there, he passed the baton of spiritual leadership to Joshua. Then Moses died. Joshua was faithful to bring them in, defeat the Canaanites (most of them), and teach them God's Law. Then he died. Who did Joshua pass the baton of faith to?

Joshua didn't pass the baton! Let's read what happened—

- Judges 2:6-15 ⁶When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land. ⁷And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel. ⁸And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110 years. ⁹And they buried him within the boundaries of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. ¹⁰*And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel.*
- ¹¹And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. ¹²And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger. ¹³They abandoned the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroath. ¹⁴So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. ¹⁵Whenever they marched out, *the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned*, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress.

(pray . . .It's not just about what we do while we're here, it's also about what we leave when we're gone . . .)

Intro: Passing the baton.

What went wrong? One generation didn't pass the baton of faith and obedience to God to the next generation, so "*there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.*" And it was a train wreck. They left the faith and turned to the horrible idols of the nations around them. And God, who had fought for them in the Book of Joshua, "*was against them for harm, as the Lord had warned.*"

Imagine if Joshua had lived to see this happen - he would have been heartbroken. But he was at least partly to blame because obviously it wasn't a priority for him to train up someone to take his place. He dropped the baton.

- I've told you before about a family Janice and I knew many years ago. They lived on a 10 acre ranch with their own ¼ mile track, and once a year, they would line their kids up on that track, and have a relay race. And starting with dad, each would take a lap: dad would pass the baton to mom, then mom to the first kid, and so on until they went through all the kids. *They did this once a year* - to impress on the family that faith in Jesus Christ must be passed on - from one generation to the next. You can't drop the baton, or not everyone will finish the race.

This is why we started MCS 24 years ago. Turn over to Ps.78 - this is the passage I preached on when we were explaining to our church family why we needed a Christian school—

- Psalm 78:1-7 ¹Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! ²I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, ³things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. ⁴We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. ⁵He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, ⁶that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, ⁷so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments;

It's not enough that God saved you and me and entrusted us with the precious truth of the Gospel, we must pass it on to the next generation. And even that's not enough - we must teach them to pass it on to the next generation, and on and on. Until Jesus returns.

* * *

How does this fit into our 4 priorities? *It's the one that keeps them going from one generation to the next.* The **Upward** - staying God-centered, committed to His glory and the exaltation of Christ; The **Inward**, committed to loving and building up the body of Christ. The **Outward**, getting the Gospel to Middletown and beyond.

- But we can do all of these and do them well, and it will all end with us - unless we train up the next generation to continue to uphold these same biblical priorities, and train up another generation to repeat the process.
- After 40 years, we see it often around here: Some dear, faithful saint served for years, taking care of some ministry or some part of our facilities, and then they move on or go to glory - and someone comes and asks, "So where is the key to this?" or "What is the procedure for that?" or "Where is that electrical line buried?" I dunno. So-and-so didn't write it down, didn't pass that info along - so we start from scratch.

It's one thing to forget where we put a key, it's another to forget our spiritual priorities. If that happens to MBC we will go through a life cycle, just like a person: from our birth, back in 1979, to our growing years, to our middle age, to old age, and then eventually, *death*. No more MBC. Maybe the public school takes over our buildings. Or the casino. It happens all the time. In fact, it's the norm for most churches. We will only be an exception if we know our priorities and intentionally, strategically pass them on to the next generation. So look with me at our 4th priority—

- **4.) Forward** - We are committed to looking beyond our own generation to train up the next generation to continue the mission God has called us to. Leadership training and reproduction is an ongoing, intentional priority as Paul told Timothy: "*What you have*

heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I want you to hear this message with two applications: **the first is this church - MBC.** What do we need to do to keep the lampstand of MBC lit for another 40 years? --So that we continue to preach the Gospel, love and serve people - and hold the ropes for our extended church family out on the mission field?

I want you to ask yourself how this church family has helped you to grow in Christ - maybe you came to know Christ here. Over 40 years we've seen entire families saved here, and some are going on 3 generations. What has this church family meant to you when you were suffering or sick? How has it given you a place to serve, and your family a place to grow? Where would you be on a Sunday if MBC wasn't here?

- Many of you know what it's like to be in a place where you can't find a loving, Bible-teaching church family. It's like being in a desert. There is nothing more important to your own spiritual life and the spiritual life and destiny of your family than being part of a solid, Christ-exalting church - so shouldn't you want to preserve that here in south Lake County after you move on or are gone?
- To me it's like visiting Yosemite. You're awestruck at God's creation. It's a worship experience - and you are so thankful that people have had the foresight to preserve this place so that you could enjoy it. And as you're driving out, you throw all of your trash out the window! No! You wouldn't do that. Why? Because you are thinking of the next people who come to visit this place. You might even be back. You want to pass it on to the next generation.

How much more the church where you have grown, people have been saved, and the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed? This is a *stewardship*. Shouldn't we do all we can to pass that along to the next generation?

So that's the "forward" on the church level, but I want you to hear this message with a personal application too - you and your own family: Are you passing the baton of faith in Jesus Christ to your children? What will you leave for the glory of God when you go?

I want you to see this principle in God's Word—

I. Moses passed the baton.

Let's go back to the disaster we read about from the book of Judges. It shouldn't have happened. God had instructed Moses in the way to pass on the faith from one generation to the next. Way back in Exodus, on the night before God saved His people from the angel of death who would "pass over" the houses where He saw the blood of the Lamb sprinkled, He ordered the people to eat a special meal to remember this night and all that it meant. And at a certain point in this meal, something very significant was to happen—

- Exodus 12:24-27 ²⁴You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. ²⁵And when you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. ²⁶And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' ²⁷you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.'” And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

They were *commanded* to go through this ritual - it wasn't optional. And God even gave them the lines to repeat to pass this story on to their children. Year after year, over and over. I think that is amazing.

*This was the OT equivalent to the Lord's Table, wasn't it? "Do this in remembrance of how God saved us by the blood of the Lamb on that night!" It pointed directly to the cross.

Do you do *anything* like that in your families? Do you ever intentionally sit the family down and go over what God has done in your lives? The spiritual milestones in your lives and in your family? Moms and dads. do your kids even know your own testimony - how Christ saved you? Shouldn't they know that? I believe God commands us to do it. Listen again to this from Ps.78

- . . . tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. . . He commanded our fathers to teach to their children, ⁶that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, ⁷so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

Well after 40 years of grumbling and whining in the desert, they still aren't following the Lord, so in Deuteronomy Moses repeats himself to a new generation, and he says again - primarily to the fathers, they must pass the baton of faith and obedience to God to their children—

- Deuteronomy 6:6-7 ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Same strategy, right? "You have to *always* be at it - especially you dads - *always* training, correcting, encouraging your entire family in the faith." You need to be saying: "Kids, we are not a Canaanite family. We don't do what they do. We love God in this home. Yes it's hard, and it's not popular, but as for us and our household, *we will serve the Lord.*" Dad's do you talk like that to your wife and kids? Do you remind them about how God has blessed your family? Times when He has answered your family's prayers?

You say, "I don't know what that looks like." Well let me show you—

- Deuteronomy 6:20-25 ²⁰"When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the Lord our God has commanded you?' ²¹then you shall say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²²And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. ²³And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. ²⁴And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. ²⁵And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us.'

That's what it looks like. Talk about the Lord. All the time, and what He has done: "*Great things He has taught us. Great things He has done. So loved He the world that He gave us His Son!*" Just sing the song and you're halfway there. But do something.

Moms and Dads: are you intentionally, constantly, passing the baton of faith in Christ to your children? Are you training them in His ways? There's no iron clad guarantee in Scripture that they will take the baton and run with it - but are you even holding it out to them?

*You know, if you aren't passing along your faith to your kids, the Canaanites will pass theirs along. They will train them in their ways! They are very organized and intentional about it. They even have their own school system to indoctrinate - really? Uh, yeah, right next door. You can know this with certainty: your kids will follow someone. They will trace their lives around someone they look up to: will it be you and your Christlike example - or some de-bauched pop star or athlete?

II. Jesus passed the baton.

If we could rub our eyes and read the Gospels like it was the first time, we would see that a *major* theme in the four Gospels is Jesus' training of the Twelve. Jesus did mighty miracles, and made incredible claims about Himself, and through all of this, the Twelve Disciples are always watching, and He is constantly training them: "Do you understand what I just did? . . . so guys, how are we going to solve this problem? Didn't you get the lesson from the last time I fed a multitude? Get out your notebooks, let's go over it again. . ." This was *constant*. , In John's Gospel, he devotes 4 entire chapters, 13-16 to Jesus' passing the baton to His men right before He goes to the cross.

*When I was still a baby Christian I read a book that rocked my world, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, by Robert Coleman. The author showed that Jesus' strategy for gathering in His elect all depended upon making disciples who would go out and make disciples, who would go out and make disciples - until the Gospel was preached to the whole world, and the end would come—

- "It all comes back to His disciples. They were the vanguard of His enveloping movement. "Through their word" He expected others to believe on Him (Jn. 17.20) and these in turn to pass the word along to others, until in time the world might know who He was and what He came to do. His whole evangelistic strategy - indeed, the fulfillment of His very purpose in coming into the world, dying on the cross, and rising from the grave - depended upon the faithfulness of His chosen disciples to this task. It did not matter how small the group was to start with so long as they reproduced and taught their disciples to reproduce. This was the way the Church was to win - through the dedicated lives of those who knew the Savior so well that His Spirit and method constrained them to tell others. As simple as it may seem, this was the way the Gospel would conquer. He had no other plan."

Look with me at—

- Mark 3:13-15 ¹³And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. ¹⁴And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might [what?] *be with him* - and he might send them out to preach ¹⁵and have authority to cast out demons.

Jesus called and appointed these 12 men for two purposes: that they might *be with Him*, and that He might send them out. But first, was that they might be with Him.

- This is where their training and their transformation began, and this was the heart of it - they were going to live with the Son of God who never uttered a word that was untrue, never said or did anything unkind or unloving. They were going to hear Him teach

as no man ever taught, and see Him live as no man has ever lived. They watched Him constantly sacrifice His own needs and comfort for others; exhaust Himself serving others, and finally step forward to be mocked, tortured, beaten almost to death, then nailed to a cross for the sins of His people, even though He was sinless.

And then they would be ready to be sent out to make disciples of all the nations. This was Jesus' method, and it's still His method: Jesus chooses men and women to be *with* Him to become *like* Him to be sent out *by* Him to *proclaim* Him.

We say this often because it's so important: Jesus didn't say, "Go into all the world and make converts.. . just get 'em saved!" No, we are to make *disciples* - obedient followers of Jesus Christ. Which of course, means that they are connected to a local church body where Jesus Christ, our Head, nourishes His body through the gifts of the individual members of His body.

- When a little baby is born, that baby has to go home with a family in order to survive and thrive, right? So likewise, if you have the opportunity to lead someone to Christ, your job isn't over! Jesus calls you to make a disciple out of this convert, bring them to church where they can grow and learn to obey all that Christ taught - which includes the Great Commission - turn with me there—
- Matthew 28:19-20 ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The principle of passing the baton is right here. You say, "Where?" Well Jesus commands all of His disciples to go, make disciples, baptize them and teach them to obey all that He commanded, which includes this very command to go, make disciples, etc., etc.

i.e., If we are obedient to Jesus, we should teach any convert that they are to go and make more converts and instruct them to repeat the process, over and over.

And we see the greatest example of this in the life of Paul—

III. Paul passed the baton.

Paul was driven to reproduce Christians who would reproduce other Christians, and churches that would plant other churches—

- Acts 14:21-23 ²¹When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²²strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.
- Titus 1:5 ⁵This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

Paul wouldn't dream of conducting an evangelistic campaign, see people get saved, and then just wish them luck and move on to the next town! NO, he was like a spiritual parent who nurtured and fed his children and made sure that they would grow healthy and strong to be spiritual parents themselves one day.

Paul always had people with him, watching him, following his example. And this was intentional: Paul had an urgency about reproducing himself, training up others to take his place so that he could take the Gospel to other places. It's startling to see how bold Paul was about telling others to follow his example:

- 1 Corinthians 4:16 ¹⁶I urge you, then, be imitators of me.
- 1 Corinthians 11:1 ¹Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.
- Philippians 3:17 ¹⁷Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.
- Philippians 4:9 ⁹What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

*I don't know about you, but I struggle with that: it feels presumptuous and prideful for me to say to another Christian, "Follow me, the way I follow Christ! Trace your life around mine the way I trace mine around Christ!"

What would Paul say about this fear? I believe he would say, "Get over it. Get serious about following Jesus if you call Him your Lord and Savior. And then out of love for your brothers and sisters, *'set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.'*"

So turn with me now to our passage in 2 Timothy. Paul poured his life into his child in the faith, and when we come to his second and last letter to Timothy, Paul knows that his time left on earth is short. There is such an urgency in this little letter for Timothy to take up the baton of the Gospel ministry and to pass it on to others—

- 2 Timothy 2:1-2 ¹You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ²and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Jesus Christ had entrusted the Gospel message and ministry to Paul—

- 1 Timothy 1:11 Paul speaks of *"the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted."*
- Titus 1:3 He says that this ministry and message were "entrusted by the command of God our Savior."

Paul was deeply aware that he had not only been saved by Jesus Christ, but also entrusted with the Gospel message as a precious stewardship, and he must pass this precious stewardship on, which he does, to Timothy—

- 2 Timothy 1:14 ¹⁴By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

And now, Timothy must also entrust this Gospel message and ministry to others—

- ²and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men—

“They don’t have to be intellectual giants, Timothy, or super administrators - but they have to be faithful with the Gospel message and ministry. They can’t drop the baton, and they have to be committed to pass it on. That is part of being faithful, because it can’t stop with these men—

- (faithful men) who will be able to teach others also.

I.e., the faithful men must pass it on to other faithful men who repeat the pattern. So we have 4 generations here in passing the baton of the Gospel—

- Christ to Paul, Paul to Timothy, Timothy to faithful men, faithful men to others also . . . and the baton keeps getting passed.

This is why you and I are here this morning, right? Someone was faithful to pass it on.

IV. MBC has to pass the baton.

I read something once that caused me to stop and pray about my own life: “I have precisely one lifetime to make certain that the Gospel survives and thrives in another generation. I must labor fervently and invest wisely.”

- The older I get the more I think about this: “What will I leave when I go?” - What am I going to leave for the next pastor at MBC? As Rudi is always telling me, “You’re not going to live forever, you know!” Yeah, and you’re not looking so good yourself. . .

Am I laboring fervently and investing wisely to see the Gospel go beyond my own life and my own borders?

**Community Bible Church of Butuan. . . “*

What can you do to keep the lamp lit here at MBC, after you’re gone? Are you thinking about the next generation? Dustin mentioned at our annual meeting last Sunday that the Brassfields are going to be leaving us at the end of this school year - we are going to miss them dearly - but we also need to be think and pray about who will take the baton from them and continue our youth ministry.

- Tana is so intentional about raising up other ladies and even our younger girls - *reproducing* herself so that one day when she can no longer serve, there will be others to take her place. And she has her work cut out for her because it takes at least 10 ladies to equal one Tana!

Parents—

Do you have a strategy for passing the faith to your children? Are you intentional about it? Whatever you are doing or not doing, you *are* leaving a mark on their lives - but what is it? Bottom line: Are you pointing them Christ and the church, or away from Christ and the church? They are watching you. I read this - it’s not fancy, but it’s right on—

- There are no downtimes, time-outs, or do-overs. Everything you do, every moment of the day, teaches your children something about life, whether you are even in their presence or not. The time you spend away from them at your job, at social functions, on dates with your spouse, on the golf green, or on business trips speaks to them about the importance of each of those activities. You pass the baton of faith moment by moment, in a thousand seemingly insignificant words, phrases, activities, and con-

versations. In other words, just as in a relay race, the baton is not taught, it is caught *"when you are at home or out for a walk; at bedtime and the first thing in the morning."*

But whether you are a parent or not, I ask you, "Are you intentionally reproducing what God has done in your life in the life of another? Someone said that "The greatest use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it." And last I checked, the only thing in this world that is eternal, besides God and His Word - is human souls. Are you pointing others to Christ

- Spurgeon said: "A good character is the best tombstone. . . Carve your name on hearts, not on marble."

Erroll, Rudi, and me met yesterday and we were literally looking **30 years** down the road for MBC. Will this church still be here exalting Christ, looking upward, inward, and outward? Only if we are looking forward right now.