

Opening Caleb Panter:

- I. Community Call to Disciple Next Generation
 - a. Deuteronomy 6:4-9
 - i. "Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules^[a]—that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, ² that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. ³ Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.⁴"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.^[b] ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You 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. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (SLIDE)
 - b. This is a community-wide call to teach and influence the next generation.
 - c. Next Generation Encouragement
 - i. If you are a student in this room, YOU MATTER!
 - d. This morning, I want to inspire the whole community to work together to recognize our role in this pursuit of influencing the next generation to fall in love with Jesus.
- II. Family Ministry Definition and Fellowship Dallas Mission
 - a. When we talk about Family Ministry, we are talking about
 - i. Ministries at fellowship that work with ages ranging 0-18 (from cradle to graduation)
 - b. When we are talking about the Family Ministry Strategy at Fellowship Dallas, it is intricately tied to the mission of our church which is:
 - i. Calling each other to live out our God-given purpose in Christ everyday (SLIDE)
 - c. Family Ministry Mission
 - i. Calling the next generation to live out their God-given purpose in Christ every day.
 - ii. It is our deepest desire to build and execute a Family Ministry Discipleship strategy that helps the next generation fall more in more in love with Jesus
- III. Influences on Next Generation
 - a. So many influences . . . culture, friends, media, social media, etc.
 - b. We believe there are 2 main influences that need to impact the next generation
 - i. Church
 - ii. Home
 - c. As we look to other ministries and experts in the field of influencing the next generations, our friends at Orange (a non-profit whose mission is to support churches in their work of discipling kids and teenagers) remind us of the power of combining these 2 essential influencers.
 - i. Orange reminds us that "two combined influences can make a greater impact than just two influences."
 - ii. Two truths:
 1. No one has more potential to influence a child than a parent. (SLIDE)
 2. A parent is not the only influence a child needs. (SLIDE)
 - a. This is where the church comes in.
- IV. Best Practices and Strategy
 - a. Here is ultimately what we are trying to do with our Family Ministry at Fellowship Dallas
 - i. "Influence leaders and parents to create community around the timeless message of Jesus that mobilizes the next generation to live out their God-given purpose in Christ every day."
 - b. So, how do we do this?
 - i. 5 Family Ministry Essentials (these are markers that all successful discipling cultures have – Orange)
 1. Align leaders around a common strategy and common values. (SLIDE)
 - a. The family ministry at Fellowship Dallas is a team

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- i. If we are going to do this well, we must be aligned and all of us must recognize our role in this.
 - 1. Consists of Pastors, lay leaders, parents . . .
 - 2. We will be working toward success when we are all working together – aligned with a strategy that helps us think about where we want to go and how we want to get there.

1. Refine the message to create engaging, relevant, and memorable experiences. (SLIDE)
 - a. When we look at the facts, most kids and teenagers will show up at our church less than 50% of the time. That means, for example, that we will have about 25-30 hours a year to invest in the life of a typical middle schooler.
 - b. 30% of those hours will be spent
 - i. Trying to find the room
 - ii. Interacting in games
 - iii. Updating their social media
 - iv. And saying goodbye to each other as they leave
 - c. That same middle schooler will spend
 - i. 200 hours studying math
 - ii. Watch on average 500 hours of tv
 - iii. Look at their smart device 900 hours
 - d. Realistically we have somewhere between 20 and 40 hours with them this year as a church (unless there is a retreat or an extended time with them)
 - i. In these 20 – 40 hours, we must prioritize and say what matters most.
 - ii. We are committed to:
 1. Teaching Jesus
 2. Making sure every student know that they are made on purpose for a purpose
 3. And to keep improving how we create and communicate timeless content for the sake of one's faith
2. Elevate community so relationships are a priority. (SLIDE)
 - a. Here's what we know.
 - i. Leaders who connect with kids and students in a small group over time have the potential to make a big impact on their faith.
3. Influence service as an integral part of discipleship. (SLIDE)
 - a. There is a big difference in doing ministry for our kids and doing ministry with kids.
 - b. If our students never experience the thrill of playing the game, they can grow up and grow out of church.
 - c. We know that "if we want kids or teenagers to feel significant, we have to give them something significant to do."
4. Engage every parent to be the parent they want to be. (SLIDE)
 - a. As a church we have around 40 hours of influence in a year.
 - b. Parents have 3,000 hours of influence in a year.
 - c. What does "engage parents" mean?
 - i. Orange did a study that asked this question.
 1. We help parents win when they become . . .
 - a. More intentional at home
 - b. More connected to a community.

V. Closing challenge

- a. Deuteronomy 6
 - i. ⁴"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.^[b] ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.⁶ And 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.
- b. This desire we must "call the next generation to live out their God-given purpose in Christ every day" is going to take all of us.
- c. This is a church family matter, and we all must find our way to engage in this pursuit.

VI. 2 Ceremonies

- a. Parent Dedication led by Kristi McElheney our Kids Pastor
- b. Senior Send-Off led by our Student Pastor Emily Harmon

Parent Dedication Kristi McElheney:

The passage that Josey just read and Caleb just talked about is called the *Shema*. It was basically the life verse for the Israelites. They recited it every morning and every evening. It was a constant reminder not only to love God with ALL their being, and live their lives according to His Law, but also gave them the responsibility to tell their kids about Him.

When God gave them His Law, His intent was not to be legalistic, His purpose was driven by love and grace. He knew that if they followed His commands, if they stayed within the structure He had given them, they would not only live better lives, but they would also represent Him well and the nations around them would see that they had something different, something good. They would be a good witness for God.

But that wasn't all, as we are reminded in Psalm 78, they couldn't keep it secret, they needed to teach their children. They needed to pass on their faith from generation to generation.

SLIDE: Milestone Verse

"O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth.

""

We will not hide them from [our] children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.

He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands." – Psalm 78:1, 4-7

God gave them a "Faith Succession Plan."

The families that will be standing here in just a moment to celebrate this first milestone with their child, are choosing to step into God's "Faith Succession Plan." They are choosing to publicly declare their intent to **Hear** and **Listen** to God's word and to **Live** it in such a way that they pass it on to their children and give them a foundation to build their lives on.

Let's meet these families. Watch this video.

VIDEO: Parent Dedication Video

As a parent dedicating yourself to your raise your child in a Christ-centered home, and live according to God's

"Faith Succession Plan," you are making the following commitments taken from Scripture. As I read each statement, you respond with "I will."

SLIDE: Parent Dedication Commitment Statements

- **Commitment 1:** I will choose this day to live with the commands of God on my own heart and model a Christ-like life for my child.
- **Commitment 2:** I will accept responsibility to be my child's primary faith trainer and impress the truth and love of God on my child as we live life together.
- **Commitment 3:** I will love my spouse and my child with the unconditional love of Christ.
- **Commitment 4:** I will pray for my child to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

As you make these commitments as parents, the body of Christ, the church commits to partner with you to raise your child in a godly way throughout his life at Fellowship.

So, church family, let's join them in this journey. Will you stand and read with me this statement of congregational response over these families?

SLIDE: Congregational Response:

"As the body of Christ, the church family, we commit today to praying for each of these families, to encourage them in being reflections of Christ in their own lives, and to living as examples before them, and to partnering with them in leading their children into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ."

Senior Send-Off Emily Harmon:

It's an honor to continue the celebration this morning by celebrating 3 of our graduating seniors this year.

All 3 of these students have been a faithful part of our church body over the years, and it's a joy to stand beside them in a few minutes in support as they begin to launch into the world as young adults, trained and equipped by our church, to go be a light and walk in Jesus wherever God directs their next steps.

In thinking about this specific milestone in life, a passage from scripture that is fitting for a moment like this is Colossians 2:6-7.

SLIDE: Milestone Verse

Colossians 2:6-7 (ESV): "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."

In these verses, Paul is speaking to the Colossian church about spiritual progress. He wants them to know the truth so they will not be led astray by other voices in the world, and more than anything else, he wants them to experience LIFE in Christ.

As a Christian, Paul is encouraging the Colossians to always be moving towards **growth** in their faith. That growth is seen in 4 ways here. A healthy, growing Christ-follower is...

1. **Firmly rooted IN CHRIST**, like a tree.
2. Because of those firm roots, a growing Christian is also **being built up IN CHRIST** where the growth is visible and expanding.
3. A healthy Christian is also **being "established IN THE FAITH"** because of their training in God's Word. Our faith is the establishment from which all of our decisions come from.
4. And lastly, a healthy growing Christian is **"abounding in thanksgiving"** – when we are in a state of health, a product of that health is an overflowing spirit of gratitude to God.

These are the marks of the Christ-follower we hope our children become and we hope that every mature believer becomes. It's what we are hoping every family in our church begins to work towards when their children are born and then continues to cultivate in their children as they grow into young adults and throughout their entire life. We have a beautiful picture of that this morning in our young families dedicating themselves and now with our graduating seniors.

So at this point, I want to welcome up our 3 graduating seniors at this time.

- Roi Mwangomo
- Celestine Omwony
- Priscilla Hermosillo

These young men and women are here to publicly declare their intent to continue walking in Jesus in whatever God has next for their lives. We are excited to celebrate with them this morning in this public declaration!

Let's watch this video to hear more about the hearts of these new young adults.

VIDEO: Senior Send-Off Video

You are now young adults, a part of the next generation of believers going into the

world, and just as Paul wrote to the Colossians, our church is calling you to the same. We are calling you to walk in Jesus.

So as a young adult stepping into a new phase of life who has grown under the training and fellowship of this church body, you are making the following commitments taken from scripture. If you agree, say "I will" after each statement.

SLIDE: Senior Send-Off Commitment Statements

Commitment 1: I will choose to live with the Word of God on my heart and live out my identity in him.

Commitment 2: I will pursue a life of devoted community with other believers where I can be courageously vulnerable and show care to others.

Commitment 3: I will seek to intentionally invest myself and my resources into commitments that honor God.

Commitment 4: I will devote myself to making an impact in the world that points others to God's kingdom purposes.

As you make these commitments, the body of Christ, the church, commits to supporting you in continuing to pursue a life that is honoring to God.

So church, will you please stand together as we read a congregational response over these 3 young adults as they step into this next phase of life?

SLIDE: Senior Send-Off Congregational Response

"As the body of Christ, the church family, we commit today to praying for your next steps to be guided by God's direction, encouraging you to follow God's call on your life, and partnering with you as you live out your God-given purpose in the world."

Will you give another round of applause for these young adults? We love each of you and are excited for what God will do in and through you in the years to come.

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**Transition to Kurt's closing comments and prayer*