



small groups

Discussion Guide



STORIES FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Deuteronomy 6:1-12

Front Porch

(Ice Breaker — 5 minutes)

Discuss

- Mark talked about Mrs. McGannon and Mrs. Davenport: two “church ladies” from his childhood who influenced his early steps of faith. Has there been someone like that in your life? Tell about them.
-

Sitting Room

(Lesson Review — 45 minutes)

Read Gen. 22:1-19 and Heb. 11:17-19

Mark talked about offering our children to God in a less literal sense than Abraham did. He recalled praying, “Lord, I surrender all of my dreams and hopes for my son and turn him over to you and your desires.” God asked Abraham to give up what was most dear to him. Any child is dear to their parents, but this was “the child of the promise” — the miracle baby that Abraham and Sarah waited their whole, long lives for.

Discuss

- What is most dear to you in the world?
- How would you react if God told you to destroy it / them?

Read Deut. 6:1-12

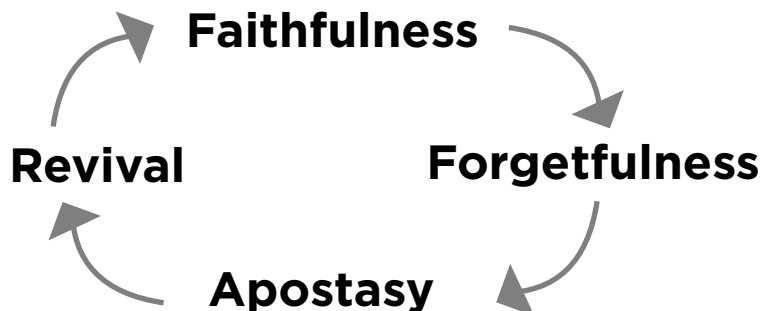
The idea of Israel entering Canaan to live in houses they didn't build and harvest from vineyards they didn't plant has several parallels:

- It speaks to God's abundant blessing. He delights to give his children good gifts.
- It speaks to the fleeting comforts of wealth. The Canaanites' great cities were not able to save them from God's purposes. Wealth and comfort are not worthy of our faith.
- It casts Israel as children. Certainly, all children live in homes they didn't build and partake of food they didn't earn. In fact, when children have to earn their food, we see that as an affront to their innocence, a failure of the adults in their life.

But children who are given every blessing without stories that accompany them grow up insolent and entitled. And in the same way, the Israelites grew apart from the God who was the source of their blessings and their identity.

Read Judges 2:6-12

For much of its history, the nation of Israel was caught in a cycle that looked like this:



Discuss

- Where do you think today's American church lies along that cycle?

Mark pointed out that the commands of Deut. 6 were given not just to Jewish parents but to the entire nation of Israel. Likewise, Christian kids are meant to be raised in a community of believers who all model authentic faith. Mark pointed out that that becomes especially important in the teen years when kids stop believing their parents "have all the answers."

Mark outlined four kinds of "stories" that the church is telling the next generation:

Stories of Isolation

These are subtle messages we can send kids that say, "Church is good. The world is bad. Stay out of the world and huddle inside the church."

Read Matt. 5:13-16

Discuss

- What do these verses say about "stories of isolation"?

Stories of Regulation

This is the model of the Pharisees, what Dallas Willard described as "the gospel of sin management."

Read Mark 2:23-28 and Matt. 12:9-14

- What do these verses say about "stories of regulation"?

Stories of Agreement

This is called syncretism, when the church adopts the values of the culture around it.

Read Matt. 16:24-26 and 1 Pet. 2:9-12

- What do these verses say about "stories of agreement"?

Stories of Transformation

This is the kingdom of God breaking forth among the kingdom of the world. This is the gospel transforming culture from the inside out.

Read Jer. 29:4-7 and 1 Pet. 3:8-18

- What do these verses say about “stories of transformation”?
-

Kitchen

(Application – 10 minutes)

Discuss

- Last week, we talked about our parents and the commandment to honor them. Your assignment was to find some small way to honor your parents this week. How did you do?
- Who are the most important relationships you have with future generations? (If you're a parent, the answer is probably obvious.)
- How can you pass down “stories of transformation” in those relationships?
- What's one step you can take this week to encourage someone who is not your age and not in your immediate family?

Bonus Question!

- For parents of teens only: Mark said that parents often ask him if they should share their past with their teenaged kids. Have you done so? Why or why not?