

Series: Debunking Lies that Disrupt Intergenerational Community

Sermon Text: Titus 1; 1 Timothy 1; 2 Timothy 1 (App to get lesson/slides, ask questions. Color Pg)

Last time, we summarized our 2025 lessons about being God's intergenerational people and recalled this truth from Matthew 4...**Satan tricks every generation into forgetting what God deems essential.** According to Jesus, Satan is “*a liar and the father of lies*” (John 8:44) and our plan for the next several weeks is to dispel certain lies we believe that hinder our unity as an intergenerational community. One such lie is that “*church*” is more a place than a people and that only blood relatives can be considered family. Today, it will be clear that Jesus taught His Apostles otherwise as we unpack this...

BIG IDEA: Church is a family before we're anything else!

This truth is especially evident at the beginning and end of letters written by Apostle's like Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, 1 Peter, and the 3 examples we'll read today. Look at ***Titus 1:4*** where the Apostle Paul wrote: ***To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.*** In ***1 Timothy 1:2*** he said: ***To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*** Oddly, Titus and Timothy were not Paul's biological relatives! [Titus](#) was born to Greek parents whom we know little about, and [Timothy](#) had an unbelieving Greek dad and a believing Jewish mom. While this implies God can produce great servants apart from both parents being faithful Christians, our key question is: “How could Paul rightly call them true sons?” He said, their ***common faith*** made it ***true***! The New Testament is full of examples that show Christ's Apostles were taught a highly relational model of church. Let's read just one more from ***2 Timothy 1:3-6***, ***I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*** Note Paul's method for igniting

Timothy's faith...he didn't say, "*Reach deep within!*", but rather something more like, "*Remember your ancestor's previous and ongoing love, investment, and prayers!*" Mentioning his mom and grandma is a window into what the church should be...an intergenerational community!

More evidence of family language being a core (essential, defining) concept of the church is that our Founder called Himself "*the Son/our brother*" and taught disciples to pray to God as "*our Father*." The church today is known for many things, but family language is non-negotiable. Let's test my hypothesis with a fill in the blank: "*If we cut out X, are we still a church?*". While there are good reasons to scale back what churches do, to eliminate family language deletes a key part of our DNA which turns Christ's church into a mutation! It's maddening, then, that Barna Research found only 10-20% of churches foster intergenerational relationships! So, "*Why are congregations not integrating youth?*" It's not that young folks hate faith, but our poor conduct and lack of authenticity do keep them at bay. While media outlets tout this as Christianity's demise, God keeps performing miracles like [The Asbury Revival](#) and [Gen Z's rising interest in faith](#) (click those articles in our notes). I love serving a God who delights in resurrecting what appears hopelessly dead (cf. Ezekiel 37)! Part of Satan's psychological warfare involves spreading lies that what began with Jesus 2000 years ago has run its course. Revelation 11:15 on the other hand claims, "*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.*" I wonder, "*Which do you most often believe, and why?*"

Relationships are the soul of discipleship in a religion which starts by "*being born again*" into God's family (cf. John 3). Maybe you've heard of [the Protestant Reformation](#). Well, I think we need a modern reformation to reclaim what Jesus deemed our best "*selling point*" in John 13:35: "*By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*" According to Barna researchers in "*Faith for Exiles*" (p. 113), young folks cited these reasons for why they remained with or returned to the church (by the way, these are common human experiences in other settings):

- 88% said, "The church is a place where I feel I belong."

- 85% said, “There is someone in my life who encourages me to grow spiritually.”
- 82% said, “I am connected to a community of Christians.”
- 77% said, “When growing up, I had close personal friends who were adults from my church, parish, or faith community.”
- 72% said, “I admire the faith of my parents.”
- 64% said, “I feel emotionally close to someone at my church.”

Okay, I think I’ve adequately proven our **BIG IDEA** that **Church is a family before we’re anything else!** Some of you get that truth should change our practices, so you’ve been asking, “*What are we being encouraged to do with all this info we’ve been learning?*” We’re simply asking, “*Will you agree with Scripture that a healthy church is intergenerational?*” In response to other questions received, future lessons will unravel that term (what it is and is not) along with the term family. But for now, let’s admit there’s a biblical pattern of God prescribing generational unity as an antidote to cultures where families are torn apart. We believe this miracle is possible because Christ’s death and resurrection demolished walls between people and provided graces like confession, repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

In closing, we’ll apply our lesson in real time. In a recent chat with our friend Dixie about reducing her load around here by making disciples, she shared one of the best definitions of discipleship I’ve ever heard. She essentially said: Discipleship starts by learning to love Jesus and others which creates a desire to be with them and help however I can (cf. Matthew 22:37ff, 28:18ff). That’s precisely what Dixie and Dave have done in nearly 30 years of friendship with Krista and me--they befriended a slightly younger couple, observed us, and offered to lighten our load with their God-given gifts. Have you ever wondered: “*How do Sundays come together?*”, or “*Who ensures that bills get paid, laws are followed, sermons get posted, liturgies get written, communion gets served, etc.?*” Those duties fall to a team led by our deacon of operations/worship, Dave Sears and his amazing partner, Dixie, who is well on her way to becoming our first female deacon. I’ve asked them to tell us all they do so you can start to know, love, and perhaps partner with them in the operation of YOUR church. As they share, recall that we’re talking about being an intergenerational church. We need younger and older believers involved in church

operations and worship! Not only is your service desired in all areas, but we also need your perspective to do what our ancestors did for us...adjust certain ways we operate (the negotiables) to ensure our relevance as culture changes (i.e., this church was crafted for us, so how will we craft it for future generations?).

Getting to know one another to the point of caring requires time and effort. So, I'll ask this: "Do you typically hang around after service or rush off to somewhere else?" Some of us should repent of barely making 75 minutes of Sunday sacred and for unwisely overloading our calendars. You can't get to know people if you don't stick around and listen. I love our Sunday services, but some of Christ's best work--the Sunday to Monday connections--happen BEFORE and AFTER service! That's where we see tasks needing done after service, who needs someone to talk to/pray with, who could benefit from help during the week. Moreover, Galatians 6:2 says to "Bear one another's burdens (is to) fulfill the law of Christ." Here's my challenge: "Are there ways God has gifted you to share Dave and Dixie's burden for YOUR church?" (or another member's burden?). If so, stick around and chat or call them this week! Wherever you are on your journey of trusting Christ, you don't have to work through that alone. Please reach out. For now, let's celebrate the greatest sign and seal of the unique unity we've discussed today...the Lord's Supper. Believers, you may participate when ready!

Sunday to Monday Connection: Galatians 6:2 says that to "Bear one another's burdens (is to) fulfill the law of Christ."

- **Question:** "Are there ways God has gifted you to share Dave and Dixie's burden for YOUR church?"
- **Next Step:** Pray about how you might help, then chat with them this week.
- **Note:** If you are not a Christ follower and would like to investigate further what all this might mean for you, please come talk with any of our leaders, or the person who brought you.

Takeaways to discuss with your people (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

1. We've said that the ending of letters like Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, 1 Peter, and the beginning of 2 Timothy 1 reveal that Jesus taught His Apostles a highly relational model of church. Read 1 or more of these chapters and discuss: "What do these texts imply that church should be?"

2. Discuss these questions: Do you view the church as an Organization, a Family, or Both? Why does this matter? In what ways has your view of church changed over time, and why?
3. In what ways have you unwisely allowed your calendar to become so overloaded that it hinders you from building deep, intergenerational relationships? What simple changes could you make?

Quotes related to this passage:

Considerations for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

Bibliography (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

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- <https://ourworldindata.org/>
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- Messianic Jewish Publishers, *Celebrations of the Bible: A Messianic Children’s Curriculum*, ed. Lin Johnson (Clarksville, MD: Lederer Books A division of Messianic Jewish Publishers, 2004).
- Daniel L. Switzer, *Train Up a Child: Successful Parenting for the Next Generation* (Clarksville, MD: Messianic Jewish Publishers, 2007).