



THE PASSION GENERATION

THE SEEMINGLY RECKLESS, DEFINITELY DISRUPTIVE,
BUT FAR FROM HOPELESS MILLENNIALS

GRANT SKELDON
WITH RYAN CASEY WALLER

Whether you are a parent, an employer, or a church leader, it's critical to acknowledge the role millennials play in the future of the church. Grant Skeldon equips us not only to understand this generation but also to connect with them in deep and meaningful relationships.

—CRAIG GROESCHEL, PASTOR, LIFE.CHURCH;
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Insightful and inspiring, engaging and enlightening, here's a much needed peek into what animates the largely misunderstood millennial generation. Thanks, Grant, for helping us understand the heart of these passionate young people.

—LEE STROBEL, BESTSELLING AUTHOR, *THE CASE FOR CHRIST* AND *THE CASE FOR MIRACLES*

Grant has become one of the leading voices on behalf of his generation. His heart to be a bridge-builder plus his keen insight on millennials make this book a necessary resource for anyone trying to engage the next generation.

—DR. TONY EVANS, PRESIDENT, THE URBAN ALTERNATIVE;
SENIOR PASTOR, OAK CLIFF BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Grant pulls back the curtain on the hearts of America's largest and most cause-oriented generation. His insights give us the foresight to engage, learn from, and equip millennials to engage in the greatest cause of all—the glory and mission of Jesus.

—DR. DERWIN L. GRAY, LEAD PASTOR, TRANSFORMATION CHURCH; AUTHOR, *THE HIGH DEFINITION LEADER*

I am so excited about this book bleeding into the hearts and minds of influencers everywhere! Grant has put in the work to understand and reach his peers. He is well suited to speak into the biggest challenges that we face in leading millennials. I am so thankful for his work here.

—JONATHAN POKLUDA, TEACHING PASTOR,
WATERMARK COMMUNITY CHURCH AND THE PORCH; AUTHOR, *WELCOME TO ADULTING*

This book reads more like a missional manifesto than a work on demographics and generational preferences. Very timely! Grant is a voice that we will be hearing more from in the future.

—ALAN HIRSCH, AUTHOR; FOUNDER, 100
MOVEMENTS AND 5Q COLLECTIVE

Grant offers insight into what drives this generation, the importance of discipleship, and how we can work together to make much of Jesus. When it comes to the mission of the church, our pews are full of people wanting to “get in the fight”; this book will help make that happen.

—MATT CARTER, PASTOR OF PREACHING AND VISION,
THE AUSTIN STONE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Grant gives us a challenging but simple solution for discipling millennials. If you are interested in the future of the church, you need to read this book, and if you are interested in the “right now” of the church, you need to read this book!

—DAVE FERGUSON, LEAD PASTOR, COMMUNITY
CHRISTIAN CHURCH; AUTHOR, *HERO MAKER*

Grant has quite possibly written the most poignant book on discipleship in our time. He puts language to things I’ve always felt but have had trouble articulating. This book should be required reading for every Christ follower.

—BRYAN LORITTS, LEAD PASTOR, ABUNDANT LIFE
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP; AUTHOR, *INSIDER/OUTSIDER*

This is so much more than a book—it is a critical brick in bridging a generation gap, finally creating the possibility for not only more understanding but also more unity, and therefore a stronger global church. This is a must-read on harnessing the power, purpose, and potential of one of the most unique generations in history.

—JORDAN DOOLEY, AUTHOR; SPEAKER;
FOUNDER, SOULSCRIPTS

Grant's prioritization of passion, purpose, and provision for individuals and wise counsel for churches within a discipleship framework is kingdom building for all who take the time to read *and* act accordingly. Thank you, Grant, for awakening in this reader a renewed focus on discipleship.

—BOB DOLL, CHIEF EQUITY STRATEGIST,
NUVEEN ASSET MANAGEMENT

Grant's wisdom and passion are far beyond his years and he is leading and guiding us all toward a healthier and fuller cross-generational understanding. This book is a resource and guidebook for so many of us, especially leaders in the church, as we seek to communicate the gospel well to each generation.

—ANNIE F. DOWNS, BESTSELLING AUTHOR,
100 DAYS TO BRAVE AND LOOKING OR LOVELY

Grant has written a book that is filled with vibrant truth. His heart and yearning to see a generation come to know Jesus is apparent throughout each and every page.

—JARRID WILSON, PASTOR; AUTHOR, *LOVE IS OXYGEN*

The Passion Generation will open your eyes and heart to the incredible gift of millennials—they're positioned and ready to grow the church, the gospel and the community of faith in ways you've never imagined. A timely, engaging, and thoughtful work.

—MARGARET FEINBERG, AUTHOR, *FIGHT BACK WITH JOY*

Grant is a proven leader in the Dallas community committed to engaging millennials in city transformation empowered by the gospel. This book is a must read for any leader who loves millennials and desires to see them reach their full potential.

—BRYAN CARTER, SENIOR PASTOR, CONCORD CHURCH

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CONTENTS

<i>TOPICAL CONTENTS</i>	8
<i>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</i>	9
<i>ONLINE EXPERIENCE AT PASSIONGEN.ONLINE</i>	11

PART 1: DISCIPLING MILLENNIALS

1. THE GENERATION GAP	15
2. WHAT MILLENNIALS WANT	27
3. PASSION, PURPOSE, AND PROVISION	39
4. THE CHURCH'S REAL PROBLEM	61
5. WHAT YOU COUNT AND WHAT YOU CELEBRATE CREATE YOUR CULTURE	81
6. THE FOUR ARENAS FOR DISCIPLESHIP	97
7. THE POSTURES, PHASES, AND STAGES OF DISCIPLESHIP	109
8. COMMON EXCUSES FOR NEGLECTING DISCIPLESHIP	125
9. FIVE QUALITIES TO LOOK FOR IN A DISCIPLE	139
10. DISCIPLESHIP REFORMATION	149

PART 2: WHAT MILLENNIALS LOOK FOR IN CHURCH

11. THE FIVE POSITIONS ON A DREAM TEAM	171
12. WHY MILLENNIALS SUPPORT CAUSES BUT NOT THE CHURCH	189
13. FOR THE MOM WHO JUST DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO	207
14. FATHERS, BE GOOD TO YOUR FAMILIES	225
15. FEARFUL, EXCITING OBEDIENCE	239
16. ICNU	253
17. LEVERAGING OUR DIFFERENCES	267
<i>NOTES</i>	287

TOPICAL CONTENTS

Skip around if you'd like.

CHAPTERS HELPFUL FOR PARENTS

3. PASSION, PURPOSE, AND PROVISION	39
6. THE FOUR ARENAS FOR DISCIPLESHIP	97
13. FOR THE MOM WHO JUST DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO	207
14. FATHERS, BE GOOD TO YOUR FAMILIES	225

CHAPTERS HELPFUL FOR PASTORS

5. WHAT YOU COUNT AND WHAT YOU CELEBRATE CREATE YOUR CULTURE.	81
10. DISCIPLESHIP REFORMATION	149
11. THE FIVE POSITIONS ON A DREAM TEAM.	171
12. WHY MILLENNIALS SUPPORT CAUSES BUT NOT THE CHURCH.	189

CHAPTERS HELPFUL FOR BUSINESS LEADERS

3. PASSION, PURPOSE, AND PROVISION	39
7. THE POSTURES, PHASES, AND STAGES OF DISCIPLESHIP.	109
12. WHY MILLENNIALS SUPPORT CAUSES BUT NOT THE CHURCH.	189
16. ICNU	253

CHAPTERS HELPFUL FOR MILLENNIALS

3. PASSION, PURPOSE, AND PROVISION	39
7. THE POSTURES, PHASES, AND STAGES OF DISCIPLESHIP.	109
9. FIVE QUALITIES TO LOOK FOR IN A DISCIPLE	139
12. WHY MILLENNIALS SUPPORT CAUSES BUT NOT THE CHURCH.	189

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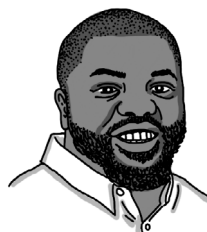
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We live in a time when there are several options for taking in a good book, from print books to audio books to ebooks. But I'm taking it a step farther.

The Passion Generation is riddled with references to videos I've handpicked to amplify and reinforce your reading experience. Each video is embedded in order on the book site: **PassionGen.Online**.

Wherever you see the device icon:



1. Simply pull up PassionGen.Online on your phone or laptop.
2. Scroll to the matching video number from the book page.

The videos in this book are must-see material—some informative, some inspiring, some sobering, and some that are just downright funny—but all of them will help you get the most out of *The Passion Generation*, so don't miss out!

PART I

DISCIPLING MILLENNIALS

CHAPTER 3

PASSION, PURPOSE, AND PROVISION

I probably see too many movies. There, I said it. Confession made. I can't help it. Seriously, I love every aspect of the experience. The smell of popcorn, the hushed voices, the anticipatory dark, and the rush of adventure when the screen finally bursts into technicolor life. The thing is I don't just watch movies. I dissect them. I study them. I've never watched a movie I haven't learned a lesson from. I don't fly Spirit because *Titanic* taught me to choose my transportation wisely. I learned from *Forrest Gump* to just say yes and enjoy the ride. And the movie *Jaws* taught me to *never* get in the water. No. Matter. What.

One of my favorite movies, though, is *Dead Poets Society*. There's a lot to be learned from this movie when it comes to millennials. In the movie, Robin Williams plays professor John Keating, a teacher desperately committed to encouraging young men to pursue their passion and purpose in life. But he teaches at an exclusive college prep school that is primarily focused on the provision mindset: landing a good job that will pay lots of money. The goal of the school is to graduate these boys into Ivy League colleges, where they will go on to become doctors and lawyers. Anything less than this kind of future is considered a failure.

In the movie, Mr. Perry pressures his son Neil to drop his

extracurricular pursuits in order to focus more on his studies so he can make it into college and then medical school. But Neil loves working on the yearbook and acting in the school play. Neil has a big decision to make. Does he listen to his father, let a piece of himself die inside, and always wonder, “What if?” Or does he disobey his father, go behind his back, and pursue things he’s passionate about?

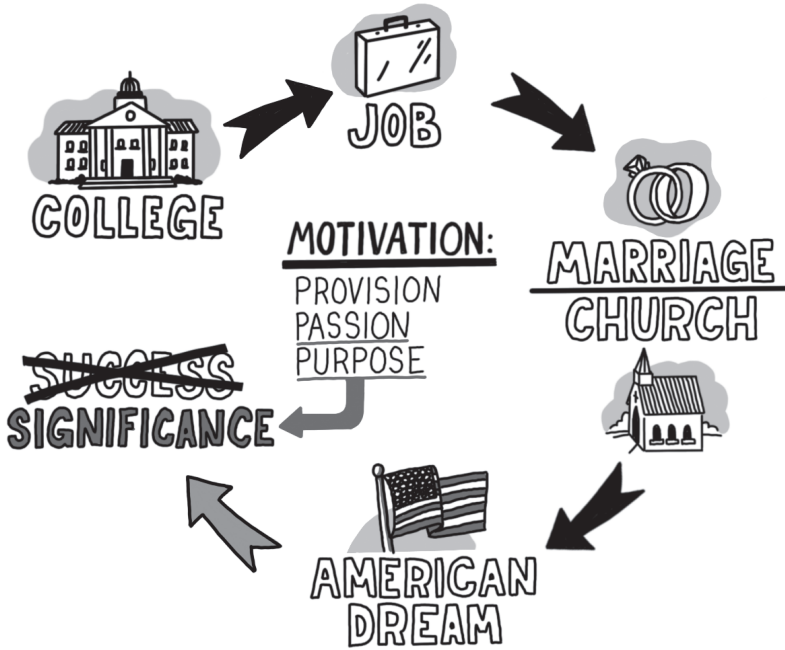
I want to point out that Mr. Perry isn’t trying to crush Neil with his rules. In his mind, he’s trying to save Neil from a childish and naive decision. Mr. Perry is focused on questions of provision and can find no place for Neil’s focus on passion and purpose. At one point, Mr. Perry declares, “After you’ve finished medical school and are on your own, then you can do as you please. But until then, you do as I tell you. Is that clear?” His single-minded drive crushes Neil’s dreams, and as those who have seen the movie know, the consequences are tragic.

Dead Poets Society, besides being a great movie, illustrates one of the biggest reasons for the generation gap between millennials and their parents. And it all has to do with how both generations view the three words embodied by Neil and his father: passion, purpose, and provision.

AMERICAN DREAM OR MILLENNIAL NIGHTMARE?

The old (and outdated) pattern for life is that people focused on provision first, before dealing with questions of passion and purpose. This is Mr. Perry’s assumption about life. Young people must receive an education in order to secure a job that allows them to achieve the American Dream: steady career, happy marriage and family, house, church membership, pension, and peaceful retirement. In a word, success. Once they were successful, they could begin to think about the passion and the purpose of their lives, or what they could do to make their lives significant. Another great example of this old way of thinking is Bob Buford’s bestselling book *Halftime: Moving from Success to Significance*. Buford’s premise is

MID-LIFE CRISIS:



that many people spend the first half of their lives chasing financial success until they encounter a midlife crisis, then realize that something is missing and spend the second half of their lives pursuing significance, not just success.

Millennials, however, have seen their parents and grandparents go through this halftime experience, and they're wondering if they want the same.

Worse, the old system is broken. All these stages of life might have worked in the past, but times have changed. The American Dream is starting to feel like a millennial nightmare.

- *College.* Has anyone noticed that these days, colleges have a better guarantee of putting your kids in debt than getting them a job? Fifty-one percent of millennials are underemployed.

They have a job, but not a job related to their degree or with the income they expected and need.

- *Job.* A lot of young people never knew their dad because he chose work over his family. Worse, it didn't even seem to give him life. It took all his time, energy, and joy, and in return it just paid the bills. Also, I often get asked why millennials aren't loyal to their companies like people used to be. My question is, "Do you feel like companies are still loyal to their employees like they used to be?"
- *Marriage.* Has any generation in the last hundred years witnessed more divorce than this one? And they say we're noncommittal. I think they want to make the right decision.
- *House.* Ever hear of the housing bubble? Upside-down mortgages, bankruptcies, foreclosures? After watching what our parents and their friends went through, it's no wonder we'd rather rent. And even now, when we want to buy, we can't find a house we can afford!
- *Church.* From the numerous scandals in the Catholic Church to the downfall of a number of well-known evangelical leaders, the church as an institution has lost a lot of credibility and moral high ground. And on a personal level, young adults have witnessed church splits, petty politics, and a lack of impact in the community. Meanwhile nonprofits, charities, and causes are tackling real problems and coming up with real solutions. Young adults seem to be going where the action is.
- *Pension.* What pension? Companies and governments are cutting pensions left and right, loyalty is no longer rewarded, and nothing is guaranteed. It seems better to gamble on a tech start-up and perhaps become a millionaire in your twenties than to work at a place for decades like your parents did, getting rewarded for years of hard work with not a promotion or a pension but a layoff.
- *American Dream.* The suburbs are not our dream destination. Retirement is not exciting, nor does it seem attainable. And

even if we've seen our parents or grandparents accomplish the American Dream, many of their achievements appear empty. There must be more to life than a big house and a 401(k).

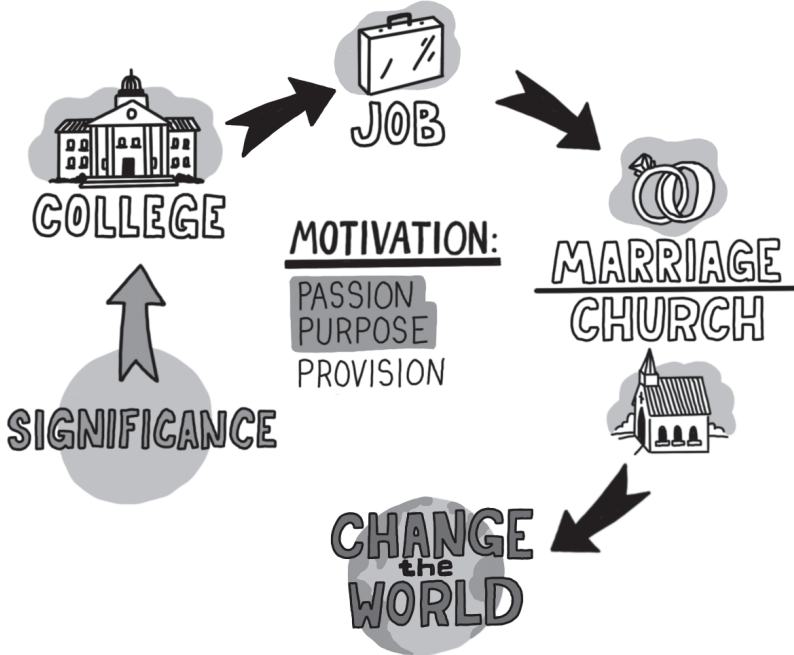
Millennials have turned this pattern on its head.

Millennials now want to have the discussion in the following order: passion, purpose, *and then* provision. They want to think about the personal, the spiritual, and then—and only then—the professional.

Gen Xers and baby boomers prioritize provision questions above questions of passion and purpose.

Millennials do the opposite.

QUARTER-LIFE CRISIS:



Before deciding how they will provide for themselves, millennials are first trying to figure out what they are passionate about and what their purpose in life is.

Only then—when the passion and purpose questions have been answered—will millennials move on to questions of provision. They will not discuss how they are going to provide for themselves until they have discovered what is worth (in their opinion) providing.

Now, my generation and I need to take ownership of our part. Ed Cole, founder of the Christian Men's Network, once said, "Maturity doesn't come by age, but rather, acceptance of responsibility." What my generation needs to accept responsibility for is that we're really bad at swinging the pendulum so far from our parents' way of life. And that's not the right outlook either. A life motivated only by provision is empty. Yes. But a life motivated only by passion

A life motivated only
by provision is empty.
But a life motivated
only by passion and
purpose is impossible.

and purpose is impossible. It's just not how the world works. It's why millennials are job hopping. We want our dream job first. But no famous actor, no great musician, and no successful entrepreneur ever started where they are now. They started at the bottom, doing what they loathed so they could

one day do what they love. Before David was a king, he was a shepherd. Before Joseph was in the palace, he was in a prison (how some young people view their current job). I've come to realize that the process enhances the final product. Remind us that it's working under Potiphar that prepared Joseph to work with Pharaoh. Because then we see the process is part of the plan.

It's critical to understand the flow to this pattern, because it is fundamentally new to American society. And what could happen, and what in my opinion *is* happening, is that young people are shutting their parents out of the planning process for their future. That's what Neil does with his dad. He goes behind his back because he no longer sees his dad looking out for his best interest.

We don't want a generation that's simply repeating or responding to the mistakes of its forefathers. Ideally, we should be learning and expanding on the foundation given to us. As we go forward, I'm going to discuss how to get us back on the same page.

PASSIONATE BUT POOR

Choosing a job is a lot harder when you're considering the amount of impact you'll make rather than just the amount of money you'll make. It's easy to measure salary. It's hard to measure impact. But studies show young people are choosing their work differently. Fifty-eight percent of millennials report they would take a drastic pay cut if they could have a job that made a difference in the world.⁸ This means the metric for choosing a career is no longer the money; it's the calling. It's no longer provision; it's passion and purpose.

The trouble, however, is that the parents of millennials don't realize this shift has taken place and continue to place provision questions ahead of questions of passion and purpose. To the millennial, this is the unforgivable sin. What older generations call pursuing the American Dream we perceive as a millennial nightmare, yet the baffled older generations look at millennials and think our desire for passion and purpose is nothing but a pipe dream!

Here is a question I ask millennials often: "When was the last time your parents expressed concern over your lack of money in the bank or from your job?"

Typically, the answer comes back fast and furious: "All the time! It's one of the main reasons they call anymore."

Sometimes it feels like parents don't really care what you do, as long as it makes money. Doctor, lawyer, engineer, architect. Any of these will suffice. Heaven forbid God calls you to something that doesn't make good money. (Like he did his Son.)

When I started out in ministry, I took every odd job I could to stay afloat and pay my bills. During this period, my father would call me every week, worried about my financial situation. His calls,

by the way, were definitely warranted, as there were many weeks I had next to nothing in my checking account. I was living paycheck to paycheck and making do sometimes with about twenty bucks a week for food and drink. I know people in other parts of the world live on far less, but in America twenty dollars doesn't go very far.

My father would say, "Grant, why don't you just get a regular job? You've been approached by multiple companies or churches wanting to hire you. You could have full-time pay and health benefits. You don't have to live like this."

It wasn't an unreasonable position for him to take. But all I could think about was that in taking a job that I wasn't passionate about, I would be trading forty hours (at minimum) of my week to do something that might swell my bank account but not my heart. I would die inside. My provision would be met but not my passions or my purpose.

For me, that was a deal breaker.

One day I told him how I felt. "Dad, you know I've been trying to get Initiative (the nonprofit I started) off the ground for a year now. But every time we talk, you bring up money as if I don't care about it. I've been keeping track. There hasn't been a single phone call in the past year when you didn't at some point bring up the subject of money."

My father was unfazed. *I'm looking after you* was his sentiment. And he was. I thank God for that. And for him. He loves me and he wanted only what was best for me. He was first and foremost concerned about my provision and didn't want to discuss my passion or purpose until my provision had been taken care of. I now understand that his concern for my provision was his way of communicating care, through his generation's worldview. But what I was focused on during that season was my passion and purpose. I was doing enough in the provision department by way of odd jobs, but I wasn't going to do any more than that. I needed to get Initiative off the ground, and I had no dependents leaning on me for food or shelter. Consequently, I was going to do everything in my power to live into my dream and subsist on the bare minimum. I was willing to suffer in the short term for a chance to do what I love in the long run.

I needed my father to trust me while I did this, but he needed to know my provision was taken care of. It makes perfect sense, but I couldn't understand his concern at the time because his refusal to ask about my passion and purpose was all I could focus on. So it didn't matter what he was saying, because all I could hear was what he was not saying.

It would have made a world of difference if my father had at least asked why I was so willing to suffer temporarily. He thoroughly knew my finances, but he didn't thoroughly know my motivation. God, in all his humor, gave me a seemingly reckless vision and a CPA as a father. We were destined for tension. Thanks, God.

Today, by the grace of God, Initiative is alive and well because men and women (my parents' and grandparents' age) believe in what we are doing and give graciously to our cause. We couldn't do what we do without them. Consequently, my father rarely asks me about money these days. He knows I have enough to eat and my bills are paid. But what he still doesn't know well is why I've chosen this life. There is no way he could stand up in front of a crowd of people and in detail tell them why I do what I do. He knows what I do but not why I do it. It's not because he doesn't care. He does. He cares a lot. His primary concern, however, is my provision. Now that my provision is secure, he believes his central duty as a parent has come to an end. He still does not understand that as a Christian, I must go where God calls me, even when that call takes me beyond the boundaries of status quo or what is safe and smart.

John R. Mott, through the Student Volunteer Movement in the late 1880s and '90s, mobilized thousands of young people to the mission field. He wrote a book called *The Evangelization of the World in This Generation*, the title of which became a popular term and goal for young leaders of his time. He even won a Nobel Peace Prize for his work! However, he had some hard words when it comes to letting young people listen to God, even

“The number one obstacle to world evangelization is Christian parents.”

—JOHN MOTT

when God calls them to do hard things. Before he died, John Mott said, “The number one obstacle to world evangelization is Christian parents.”

Christian parents. Wow. Not what I was expecting. But I see how he could get there. A father once told me, “Grant, my worst fears have happened. My daughter loves Jesus so much that she wants to be a missionary.” He was joking, but there was a little half-truth in there. It’s scary when the child you love is called to be a lamb among wolves—a light in a dark place. But the kingdom needs them. And remember, the King protects them.

There’s one sermon on the American Dream that countless millennials and Gen Xers can quote from. It’s known as “The Seashells Sermon.” It was given by John Piper at the Passion Conference in 2000. The message challenged the American Dream, questioning the goal of retirement in light of eternity, and forty thousand young people left that conference inspired not to waste their lives pursuing the wrong goal. You have to watch it.



CHAPTER 3, “THE SEASHELLS SERMON”

Look, I see enough men and women around me with huge bank accounts who are miserable. Other millennials see it too, and we refuse to walk this path. We don’t want to gain the world only to lose our souls. For millennials,

For millennials, losing our souls looks like this: we make money, but we don’t make a difference.

losing our souls looks like this: we make money, but we don’t make a difference. If you’re looking for one sentence to summarize the passion, purpose, and provision discussion, that’s it. Our parents want us to make money and then

consider making a difference, but we don’t want to make money *unless* we are making a difference.

So we understand what millennials want and why there is a generation gap. Now we need to look at what can be done about it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Before reading any further, answer the following questions.

If your millennial son or daughter could provide for himself or herself in the ideal manner, what would that look like? Write down a few of your hopes. Would they be debt free? Would they have a “respectable” job? A healthy 401(k)? A pension? What exactly would it look like for your son or daughter to provide for themselves in the ways you want them to?

1.

2.

3.

Okay, now look back over what you wrote down. And then answer this question: What if they earned everything on this list by a multiple of three, but they didn’t live a life aligned with their passions and purpose?

What if they were provided for beyond your wildest dreams, but they never got to exercise their God-given passions or fulfill their God-given purpose? Would you be happy for them?

They’d have a roof over their head and all their bills paid. They’d just feel like something was missing inside. I speak to a lot of parents, and I have yet to hear a parent answer that last question in the affirmative, because while parents want provision for their children, they also want them to keep their souls. However, most young people feel their parents’ concern only when it pertains to provision.

So . . . what if parents simply reversed the order of the conversation? Parents can remain concerned about provision but just ask the questions in a different order. Instead of leading the conversation with money, start instead with these questions on passion.

PASSION: WHAT I LOVE TO DO

1. What makes you feel alive?
2. What job would you take a drastic pay cut for?
3. What could you talk about for hours?
4. What subjects did you enjoy most in school?
5. What have you done in your life that you're really proud of?
6. What makes you different?
7. What bothers you when you see it done poorly?
8. What problems or injustices break your heart?
9. What are the top three values you look for in a friend?
10. What do you know well enough to teach others?
11. What qualities do you possess that you are really proud of?
12. Who is doing something you want to do with your life?
13. When do you feel most like yourself?
14. What project or subject could you get lost in for hours without even noticing?
15. What did you love doing as a child?

Then move on to questions of purpose.

PURPOSE: WHAT I WAS MADE TO DO

1. What are you naturally good at?
2. If you got to watch your funeral, what would you want friends and family to say about your character?
3. What system do you want to change?
4. What are some challenges you've overcome in your story?
5. What characters in the Bible do you connect with most, and why?
6. What do people most often ask you for help with?
7. What kind of husband or wife do you want to be?
8. What kind of father or mother do you want to be?
9. If you could share a message with the world, what would you say?

10. What group of people do you like to serve who are often forgotten or neglected?
11. If this was your last year to live, what would you do for yourself, your friends, your family, and the world?
12. What wrong do you want to right?
13. What do people often think you should do for a living?
14. What one word do you want the world to think of when they think of you?
15. If you could start fresh with your life and career, what would you do differently?

Once these questions of passion and purpose have been discussed, feel free to move into questions of provision.

PROVISION: WHAT I NEED TO DO

1. What sacrifices will you have to make?
2. What extra time will you have to give?
3. What kind of mentors will you need to seek?
4. What kind of friends will you need to surround yourself with?
5. What kind of friends will you need to avoid?
6. What time wasters will you have to cut?
7. What is the minimum salary you can live with?
8. What education will you have to pursue?
9. What habits will you have to break?
10. What habits will you have to form?
11. Do you have enough savings to live for six months during a job transition or in pursuit of your passion?
12. Would you be willing to downsize your lifestyle?
13. How much money will you need to earn if you have to pay off college debt?
14. What books or podcasts would you need to invest in?
15. Would you be willing to make a five year plan to accomplish your purpose?

Once these questions have been asked, answered, and discussed, millennials will be far more amenable to conversations about provision. Remember, it's not that they don't want or need to talk about money but that they will be far more receptive to a discussion on provision if they see it as a means to their passion and purpose.

Before I finish this chapter, I want to point out something and I want to thank you for something. Here it is: Millennials get the privilege to consider passion and purpose in their work *because* our parents and grandparents did whatever it took to provide a better life for their kids. If you've never heard a young person say it, thank you. Lord knows no one was coming out of the Great Depression considering their passion or purpose in their work. They just did whatever was necessary to put food on the table! But after decades of faithfulness and sacrifice, this generation has opportunities past generations haven't had, and I'd hate for us to miss them simply because we don't understand each other.

I wish all millennials understood this and felt this way. But they don't. You know that. I know that. There are a few unicorns here and there. But there are a ton of millennials who feed the stereotype. So what do we do with them? Well, keep reading.

SUPPORTING VERSUS SUBSIDIZING

Recently, I spoke to a large gathering of business leaders at Texas Instruments, an event I was pretty excited about because Texas Instruments basically helped my entire generation pass algebra. The questions folks asked were the standard ones concerning how to motivate millennials in the workplace. Finally, somebody stood up and asked the question that was really on everyone's mind. A father asked, "So I hear what you're saying . . . but . . . what do I do if the only thing my son seems to be passionate about is video games?"

The audience burst into laughter. Obviously, the question

struck a nerve. The real question was, “Do I just get behind anything my child seems to be passionate about?” The answer is no. I’m not advocating that whatever a young adult is passionate about, they should pursue as a career. Because some young people aren’t passionate *enough*. Real passion always spills into provision. If you take the time to have the passion and purpose conversation before the provision conversation, but your child is still unwilling to invest the appropriate time and sacrifice necessary, then it’s okay to draw a line. Living into one’s passion and purpose takes grit. It takes sacrifice. There is no way around it. If your millennial is unwilling to work for what they want or is too lazy to even figure out what they want, then you have every right to take drastic actions, such as cutting them off financially. Supporting them emotionally does not have to mean subsidizing them financially.

One of the hardest things that ever happened to me was when I dropped out of college and my dad refused to let me move back home. He put my stuff outside the house. When he did that, I was pretty mad. Like, really mad. But I also realized there were real consequences to my decisions. Deep down, I knew this didn’t mean my dad didn’t care about me. He just wasn’t going to enable me.

It sobered me up. Fast.

I knew I needed to choose my next move wisely. I couldn’t just do whatever I wanted. I needed money for food and a roof over my head. This made me rely on the Lord like never before. During that season of my life, I memorized Proverbs 3 because I didn’t have much direction and I needed to be reminded of the Lord’s goodness. I especially needed to remember Proverbs 3:11–12: “My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.”

It was the first time I’d ever memorized an entire chapter of the Bible. It got me thinking. Would I have memorized Scripture and relied on the Lord if I hadn’t found myself in a season of weakness and need?

This was one of the worst, best seasons of my life. You know, the kind of season you don't want to go back to, but you also don't want to remove from your story? In my weakness, I learned dependence. One of my favorite communicators to my generation, Jonathan Pokluda, says, "If dependence is the goal, then weakness is our advantage." In that season, I learned the advantages of weakness and the power of dependence.

NO OBSTACLE TOO BIG

There is nothing easy about fighting to do what you feel called to do in life. If a person wants to pursue their passion and find their purpose, then they have no choice but to do the hard work it takes to find it.

A lot of people believe millennials aren't willing to do this hard work because we are lazy or self-absorbed. But millennials aren't any different than generations before us when it comes to laziness, entitlement, and selfishness. Young people have always been hit with these critiques. Elspeth Reeve points out in a brilliant article in *The Atlantic* that in 1976 the *New York Times* said of boomers, "The now generation has now become the ME generation." Sounds like millennials. In 1990, *Time* magazine said of Xers, "They have trouble making decisions. They would rather hike in the Himalayas

Greater than millennials' fear of commitment is our fear of *missing out*.

than climb a corporate ladder. They crave entertainment, but their attention span is as short as one zap of a TV dial."⁹

Is it possible that young people just tend to be more selfish or lazy until they're married with kids? What a lot of people are interpreting as laziness is actually something else. I've found that most millennials aren't lazy. They're just uninspired. People say millennials won't commit to a job. I think they won't compromise for one. If you're selling a

dream that sounds like a nightmare, no, we're not going to bite. But sell us a future that fulfills our purpose, and it won't matter how many obstacles are in the way. We'll work for it. People point out that millennials fear commitment. It's true. But I've found there's something we fear even more. Greater than millennials' fear of commitment is our fear of *missing out*. We call it FOMO. Companies that are selling passion-filled work are leveraging FOMO to their advantage. It's a great motivator—far, far greater than guilt.

When a young person finds their passion, no obstacle is too big. Passion will change a person. We see this all the time in a relational way. I've seen teenage boys with the dirtiest rooms and the worst hygiene change in a matter of seconds. Their room and car are suddenly spotless, and their clothes are actually clean. Why? Because a girl is coming over. But not just any girl, *the* girl they're passionate about. When you find your passion, you can get lost for hours in your work. Even if the work is meticulous and mundane, it's like a puzzle to you. It's a game. Any other thing would have lost your attention at the first sign of difficulty, but not your passion. The great thing about finding your passion is that grit doesn't feel like grit. It just feels like a fun part of the process. It doesn't really feel like work. Passion turns careers into callings. Callings turn work into worship.

DEPENDENTS OR DISCIPLES?

I was speaking to a group of Christian business owners recently, a bunch of real go-getters. Men and women who have worked hard to get where they are in life. What's great about Christian business leaders is they tend to understand that success without significance is empty. But what's ironic about this group is that they still want to force their kids to submit to the old system, even though they know it's bankrupt.

So I pointed out to the group that they discovered the importance of significance in their work as a midlife crisis, but young

adults are searching for it in a quarter-life crisis. Or in the words of my friend Paul Sohn, a “quarter-life calling.” The only difference is that the older generation gets praised for it, while the younger generation gets criticized.

My dad got on me *so much* when I was younger for living irresponsibly. But you know what my parents are doing now? You’ll never believe it. They sold the house my brothers and I grew up in, bought an RV, and now they just travel America. What! *Who are these people?* Depending on the season, you can find them at an RV park in Florida, Oregon, California, or Kansas. They work easy odd jobs that pay low wages, because they don’t need much. Their costs are so low.

I joke with them that they are now the irresponsible ones living the millennial dream, and I’m now the responsible one showing up to work every day. Once my dad even needed to borrow money from me! (Oh how the tables have turned!) The funny thing is, when I tell older people what my parents are up to now, they think it’s so cool! Almost like they’re jealous that my parents took the dive.

I have to give it to my parents. There’s a freedom they live in now. Once my brothers and I moved out, they really had to consider what they wanted to do with their lives other than just make money. It’s a good question, a necessary question. I just don’t think my generation wants to wait till the end of their lives to ask it. They’re asking it right now.

One of the best encouragements I’ve gotten from the marketplace community involves a father and son. When I was finished speaking to the Christian business leaders, a man with a huge smile said, “Hey! I have to tell you something I think you’ll like.”

“Awesome! What’s up?” I said.

“I was just going down the elevator. It was full of people, and there was this Asian man in a suit apologizing to his son over the phone for never talking to him about his passion and purpose. So I just want you to know your message really connected today.”

What I love about that story is that the father took immediate action, and he did it with full humility. He cared more about that

conversation with his son than he cared about the opinion of the other leaders in the elevator. This is huge! Men tend to struggle at admitting their mistakes. Doing so, however, is so powerful. They become unforgettable moments for many young people I know. And I have a feeling that the ending to that father-son story was a happier one than that of *Dead Poets Society*.



CHAPTER 3, “THE TENSION BETWEEN PASSION AND PROVISION”

It’s never too late to earn your place back at the table in your child’s life. Let them explore questions of passion, purpose, and provision while you listen and encourage them. And don’t forget that their struggle with these questions is what will most likely lead them to Jesus and his plan for their life.

How many millennials are prepared for the real world? Not many. Does that mean parents should swoop in and rescue them? Not necessarily. Instead parents should point them to Jesus, showing them how to find their confidence in God in the midst of their difficulties. Remember, one man builds his house on the sand of his own wisdom, while the other builds his house on the rock of Christ. Neither house gets to avoid the storm. But one house does survive it. The storm reveals which foundation is more powerful and worthy. When parents step in and save their kids, God’s power isn’t seen or cherished.

God doesn’t wish for our suffering, but God will always make use of it. Our plans and God’s plans don’t always line up, but maturity happens when we trust his ways more than our wants. Sometimes young people need to suffer. For parents this is painful, but you must remember we have a God who intimately knows our suffering. He shows up in our weaknesses. It’s while walking through the valley of the shadow of death that

Our plans and God’s plans don’t always line up, but maturity happens when we trust his ways more than our wants.

we fear no evil, because God is with us. His rod and his staff, they comfort us. God doesn't just help us in our valleys. He joins us in them.

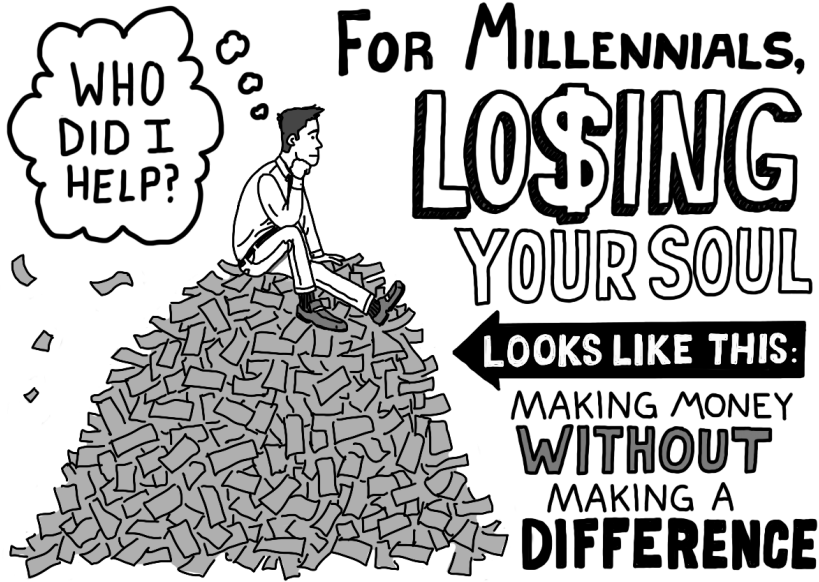
Think about this: what have been your closest seasons with God? The reality is our most intimate seasons with the Lord most likely began with our most desperate seasons "alone." But we try to rescue young people from desperate seasons. You never want your kids to think, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Mom is with me, her purse and her help, they comfort me." Instead of showing your kids how to be disciples of Jesus, you're showing them how to be dependent

Don't save your kids
from the Savior.

on you. When you step in to rescue your kids, you might be saving them from the Savior. In the words of Elisabeth Elliot, "God will not protect you from anything that will make you more like Jesus." So why

would we? Is it possible that we're trying to protect our kids from something that will make them more like Christ?

Instead help them cultivate their passions, discover their purpose, and labor through the grit of provision.



GREATER THAN MILLENNIALS'
FEAR of COMMITMENT IS THEIR
FEAR of MISSING OUT



CHAPTER 4

THE CHURCH'S REAL PROBLEM

The church doesn't have a millennial problem. It has a discipleship problem.

That's far more serious, because how do you fix a discipleship problem?

Well, the problem is serious but the answer is simple. You fix a discipleship problem by making Jesus' last words our first priority.

So what were his last words? I'm so glad you asked.

What's known as the Great Commission were Jesus' last words. I know there is a lot of talk these days about making America great again. But what Christians need to do is *make the commission great again*. See what I did there? (I may or may not have a red hat with this on it.)

Just before Jesus ascended to the Father, he left explicit instructions for what we, as his followers (aka the church), are supposed to be all about. "Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age'" (Matt. 28:18–20).

The church, then, has one mission: to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

That's it. Making disciples is the core of what the church needs to be about. I believe it's our failure to do this that has turned millennials off from the church. It's not because the church played the wrong music or the pastor didn't wear skinny jeans or have a big enough following on social media. It's because the church stopped taking discipleship seriously. Instead of inviting young people to the same exciting and demanding adventure Jesus called the disciples to, we invited them to join a club and maintain the status quo.

This is why I am not going to give you tips and tricks on how to get millennials back in church. In response to the millennial exodus, blogs and books have dedicated a massive amount of time and energy to describing changes the church can make to win millennials back.

Change the music. Change the venue. Change the name. The details are always different, but the philosophy is the same. Churches just need to make some updates to look and feel relevant to young

Instead of calling young people to a demanding adventure, we invited them to join a club.

people. Then young people will come back. There is some truth to this thinking. But here's the deal. Most of it is superficial, time-stamped techniques that might be semi-effective for some young people today but won't be for young people tomorrow. And

it definitely won't be relevant for Generation Z, which is coming up behind millennials. Trends are forever changing. That's why they're called trends.

One of my best friends was saved through the "bus ministries" that were popular in the eighties. Some well-meaning guy would drive a church-owned bus around the neighborhood, hand out candy, and come back Sunday to take the kids to church. Can you imagine somebody trying that today? Someone would call the cops. And rightfully so! Today that ministry sounds like the beginning of a scary

movie, but back then it worked. If there is one thing that remains constant in the church, it's that the trends do nothing *but* change.

Billy Graham said, "The methods change, but the message always stays the same."

And he's right. So I don't want to give you tips and tricks when I don't think they're going to be relevant in five to ten years. I want to give you the closest thing we've got to a silver bullet. It will be effective today and every day until Jesus comes back.

It's the one method that will never change because it's the one method given for the message. The method simply is this: Go and make disciples.

I once had a mentor tell me that your sweet spot of influence is among people ten years older than you and ten years younger than you. That's who you relate to best because you understand the times they grew up in. Well, if that's true, then if I disciple someone who discipless someone, then the gospel will influence generation after generation.

We need to stop treating the Great Commission like the great suggestion.

I believe once we stop treating this like a great suggestion and start trusting it like the Great Commission, revival is just around the corner.

WHAT DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT

So what is discipleship? And what does it look like? Well, before we can understand what discipleship is and how we can go about doing it together, we first need to talk about what it is not. So let's do that now.

DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT A CLASSROOM

Churches focus too much on Bible studies, Sunday school classes, and sermons. Yeah, I just said that. Look, these are all great things.

Christians have always taken learning seriously, and we shouldn't stop now. We need to be instructed in the ways of our faith if we are to grow in our faith. But traditional didactic activities in and of themselves, while helpful, are not adequate for discipleship.

We cannot expect Christians to become like Jesus if all we ever ask of them is to come to classes, sit in pews, and remain quiet while someone else teaches them about Jesus. Listening to pastors and priests and teachers will always be a part of the Christian journey. No doubt about it. After all, Jesus did a lot of teaching. It's just not the *only* thing he did. The vast majority of the teachings of Jesus were not delivered in so-called sermons. They were just things he said to the disciples along the way—things they never would have heard if they hadn't been following him in his life. Formal education is good. But education is not enough.

In the Greek, the literal meaning of *discipleship* is “being a student.” But to understand this properly, we have to understand that being a student in the ancient world was very different than it is today. Today a student shows up for a class at a particular location at a particular time. But in the ancient world, a student hung on every word his teacher said at all times of the day. Students followed their teacher everywhere, slept outside his door at night, and tried to do much more than simply learn facts from him. They tried to become like him. This was a 24/7 thing.

I had heart surgery when I was born. It was crazy abrupt and crazy expensive. I can't imagine how difficult it was for my parents. It's scary enough when you have your first child. *Am I ready? Do I have what it takes?* But how much more nerve-racking when your firstborn enters the world and you need to rush him into surgery!

Now, if my parents got to choose between a doctor who's closely read one hundred books on heart surgeries or a doctor who's closely watched one hundred heart surgeries, who do you think they'd pick? (Not to mention that discipleship is *assisting* in the work of the disciple maker.)

Discipleship is more than the transfer of information. It's the transformation of a person through following.

DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT MENTORING

Discipleship is more than mentorship. Meeting for coffee once a month is a great thing for mentors and mentees to do, but it's not as robust as full-blown discipleship. The church has fallen into a bad habit of equating discipleship with meeting over an early morning coffee to pray, read the Bible, and talk a little bit about life. This is beneficial, but it's not really discipleship.

Jesus didn't set a time to meet with his disciples for a brief conversation once a week for three years. Discipleship wasn't something he took care of before going about his business. Discipleship *was* his business.

Here is a critical distinction:



The church can no longer bank on just providing content and a message as their main commodity, because my generation can google content all day. The value of content is at an all-time low in this digital world. This is impacting colleges, the publishing

industry, and even the church. You don't *need* to go to church to get content. Millennials can live-stream a message, download a podcast, or watch a YouTube video, but there's still no app for genuine connection and life-on-life discipleship. That's what the church can provide that the world can't.

Now, when it comes to mentorship and discipleship, there is a massive difference between scheduling time to meet versus inviting someone in. Mentorship says, "Add me to your calendar." Discipleship says, "Include me in your calendar." Later, I'll dive into the mechanics of how this can be done. For now, just remember that discipleship > mentorship. Mentorship is good. Discipleship is great.

The apostle Paul told the Thessalonians, "Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well" (1 Thess. 2:8). Which do you think is more impactful: when you tell someone the gospel with your mouth, or when you show it to them with your life?

My friend Connor perfectly illustrated this "follow me" mindset of discipleship a few years back, when he asked the president

Discipleship isn't adding something to your calendar. It's including someone in your calendar.

of Dallas Baptist University, Dr. Adam Wright, to disciple him. As you can imagine, Dr. Wright is a wildly busy guy. But when Connor approached Adam and asked, Adam agreed even though he had no spare time to give. Adam did,

however, say he needed to wait a semester before taking on Connor as a disciple, because he was already discipling three other guys, meeting with each of them once a week for thirty minutes. But Connor told him, "I'm actually not interested in doing *that* kind of discipleship. I don't want to meet with you. I want to follow you." Connor then explained that he was asking Adam if he could follow him in his work life, church life, family life, or personal life.

Adam was a little taken aback, but once he realized that

Connor's proposal was not going to cost him any more time, he accepted. Connor wasn't asking for his time; Connor was simply asking for his availability. So they agreed and got down to it.

Fast-forward a few months. It's six in the morning, and Adam is preparing for the coming rigorous day by faithfully executing his early morning routine of praying, studying the Word, jogging, and eating breakfast with his wife and kids before driving to work.

And guess who is doing it right alongside him?

Connor.

When Connor asked Adam how he prepared for the morning, Adam described his routine and then invited Connor to spend the night at his house so he could do it with him. "Aren't you supposed to be following me?" he said.

So that's what Connor did. He texted me the first time he followed Adam in his morning routine. "Bro . . . get ready to feast your eyes on a new man. I am going to wake up early every single day!"

How awesome is it when a young person's passion is guided by older people's wisdom?

Think about how Connor was affected by participating in Adam's example as opposed to just hearing about it over coffee in a mentoring relationship? Great leaders wake up early. That's no secret. We've all heard that. Adam could have told Connor an early morning routine is crucial. But seeing it makes a huge difference. Something extraordinary happens when discipline and habits are caught more than they are taught. When they are caught through experience, you get to feel the benefits of rising early, entering into the presence of God, and accomplishing something, all while the rest of the world is just waking up.

These are the kinds of moments that mature young people. When a young person begins to change their habits in productive ways and envision where their life might be in five years if they practiced their new habits every day, things really start cooking. Connor began asking himself, "What would it take for me to become a man like Adam Wright?" He had at least one answer by way of example: wake up early and start with God.

Discipleship is always better caught than taught.

The disciples never would have been prepared to do what God needed them to do if they'd just sat around and met with Jesus. They needed to *follow* him. Almost every story we have of Jesus with the disciples is of them on the move. They are always going somewhere with him. And it's there, along the way, that they learn. The earliest Christians were called Followers of the Way. We too are followers of the Way—followers of Christ.

Mentorship is good.

Discipleship is great, just like the commission.

DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT A SMALL GROUP

Small groups have become too popular in the church. Now, before you accuse me of heresy and throw this book in the trash, hear me out. I'm not saying small groups are bad. What I *am* saying is that the church's love of small groups has become a problem.

Think of it this way. You often hear people quote the Bible as saying that money is the root of all evil. But the Bible doesn't actually say that. We all know money can be used for good or bad in this world. What the Bible says is, "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). It's the same with small groups. Small groups aren't bad, but our love of them frustrates me.

Why? Because I think it's our cop-out for discipleship. Small groups are easier to manage than discipleship, so they've become our acceptable replacement. There's a popular saying in the church: "Circles are better than rows." I agree. But do you know what's even better than circles?

Disciples.

When I consult with churches, I almost always ask the pastor the following question: "If I were a new Christian at your church, where would I get discipled?"

About 90 percent of the pastors say in a small group. Again, small groups aren't bad, but if that is the extent of the plan for discipleship, then Houston, we have a problem.

And most of the time, it is the plan. Most pastors admit

that other than small groups, their church doesn't really have a concrete plan of action for creating new disciples. When I press them further on the issue, asking, "Why not?" they often say they believe discipleship needs to develop *organically* in a small group context.

Organic discipleship? I'm not trying to be obnoxious, but I honestly don't know what that even means.

Whenever I'm unsure about a proposed church strategy, I try to view it through the lens of the Great Commission.

Let's look again at what Jesus said: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:18–20).

Circles are better than rows. And disciples are better than circles.

THE FOUR CALLS TO ACTION

Okay, so there are four actions Jesus calls us to in the Great Commission. Let's take each one in turn and ask ourselves whether it's wise to have an organic approach to accomplishing that task.

1. GO

If I show up at church and ask to be involved in missions—if I ask to go—I will be told exactly what to do. There will be a mission and outreach team for me to contact. There will be mission trips I can sign up for. There might even be a list of local nonprofits the church partners with to serve the community. If I am mission minded, the church will provide a place for me to go and people to go with. No church I know of leaves missions to develop organically. There is a path. There is a team. There is a plan. Always. We don't just expect people to figure it out and plan their own

trips across the globe. We strategically guide them to well-vetted partners.

2. BAPTIZE

If I show up at church and ask to be baptized, I will be told exactly what to do. Imagine the following scenario playing out in your church. A new Christian approaches your pastor and informs him that she has just been saved by Jesus and wants to be baptized. Your pastor says, “That’s great news! Let me know how that goes.”

No way. That would never happen. You would be concerned if your pastor did that! Baptism is what the church does. It will look different in every church, but the path to baptism will be carefully laid out. The church does not wait for baptism to be done organically in local lakes, rivers, and Jacuzzis. It strategically guides people through the process.

3. TEACH

If I show up at church and tell the pastor I want to learn about Jesus and Christianity, the most detailed plan will be offered. I’ll be told about classes, sermon series, blogs, books, conferences, retreats. Teaching is so highly valued in the church that most churches spend a good amount of their time planning what is to be taught. The teaching pastor is often allocated numerous hours for sermon prep. I have never known a church to leave teaching open to whoever is organically feeling it that Sunday. I have never shown up on Sunday morning at a church that didn’t have a strategic plan for what was going to be taught.

4. MAKE DISCIPLES

If I show up at church and tell the pastor I want to get disciplined, he or she will most likely tell me to join a small group. Beyond that, there usually isn’t much of a plan.

So Jesus tells us to do four primary things in the Great Commission, and it turns out the church is pretty good at executing three of them. You can see the problem. It doesn’t make

sense to not plan on making disciples. But this is precisely what the church does when its entire approach to discipleship is summed up by the admonition “Go join a small group.”

One last time. Small groups aren't bad. They're just not enough. And I don't think they're even first. I think discipleship is. Jesus didn't start a small group and then pick disciples out of it. He picked disciples, and that started a small group.

My ultimate question, then, is this: Why do we approach discipleship so organically when Jesus approached it so strategically? If I put fifty people in your church in separate rooms and tell them, “Write down your church's discipleship strategy,” are you confident their answers will be the same? If not, then we haven't properly given our people any language or direction for something Jesus said is high priority. I've found that values without vehicles eventually become just cool words on the wall.

I've found that values without vehicles eventually become just cool words on the wall.

You know, I'm only half Mexican, and I don't know the language well, but I swear that when churches use the word organic, it's Spanish for “we have absolutely no plan whatsoever.”

Just think organic vegetables. It basically means the vegetables are untouched. They haven't been changed, they haven't been altered, and they haven't been tampered with. Well, I'm convinced that when Jesus entered the disciples' lives, they were changed, altered, and tampered with.

I'm not saying discipleship is easy. I'm just saying it's worth it. The Great Commission needs great attention, not organic hopes or spiritual finger-crossing.

I said it before and I'll say it again. We don't have a millennial problem. We have a discipleship problem. And if we don't fix it, then millennials will be the last of our worries. Because there's already another generation on the way. So what we prioritize over the next ten years will make or break the American church.

DISCIPLE OR CHRISTIAN?

The word Christian appears in the New Testament only three times. I bet you didn't know that. I also bet you didn't know this: the word disciple appears 269 times.

Let both of these facts melt your brain for a moment.

As Christians, we believe that every word in the Bible is "God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). This means we know that God intentionally made the word disciple appear 266 more times than he did the word Christian.

The late, great Dallas Willard described this perfectly when he said, "The New Testament is a book about disciples, by disciples, and for disciples of Jesus Christ."

Nonetheless, I think most Christians are slow to describe themselves as disciples of Jesus. Saying that we are Christians is far more comfortable.

Let's look at what discipleship entailed for Jesus.

"While walking by the Sea of Galilee, [Jesus] saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men'" (Matt. 4:18–19 ESV).

The marks of discipleship come directly from Jesus himself, in three parts.

1. Follow me: Join my life.
2. I will make you: I commit to make you something new.
3. Fishers of men: This can't just terminate with us.

I want to emphasize Jesus' words "I will make you" because it's a commitment.

It's very easy to make fun of young people who are dating, because their relationship status is often so ambiguous these days. They struggle with commitment. This can especially be humorous

if you come from a time long, long ago, when you were either in a relationship or you weren't. It was that simple. Binary.

These days, however, if you ask a young couple spending significant time together if they are a thing, you might get any one of the following answers.

- "We're just friends."
- "We're just hanging out."
- "We like each other."
- "We're talking."
- "We're dating."
- "We're waiting."
- "We're tindering."
- "We're courting."

Talk about #DTRprobs. Defining the relationship can be hard for young people. But you know what? I think defining the relationship can be hard for church folk too. People say my generation has fear of commitment. Well, I think Christians have fear of commitment—the commitment.

I have found that most Christians consider themselves to be disciples of Jesus Christ, even though they have never committed to disciple someone, like Jesus Christ.

Jesus asked, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46).

When you say, "I will make you," you're making the kind of commitment often made in some of the greatest stories ever told. It's the tipping point in many well-known epics.

One influential book in Hollywood and the world of literature is *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell. This book informed the storytelling of George Lucas, Stanley Kubrick, Bob Dylan, Walt Disney, and countless others. The basic premise of the book is that every great story starts with the main character experiencing these three events:

- The Call to Adventure
- Refusal of the Call
- Supernatural Aid

Think about a traditional movie plot. It starts with a young man with a dream in his heart. He knows he is different and there is something he must do with his difference, something that will help others. But then he encounters challenges and obstacles that hinder him with feelings of inadequacy. He wants to become who he is meant to be, but his abilities lag behind the call. He needs help.

Enter the sage, a mentor who comes alongside our budding hero to ensure he becomes the hero.

We've seen this over and over again.

Mr. Miyagi and the Karate Kid. Obi-Wan Kenobi and Luke Skywalker. Morpheus and Neo. Professor X and Wolverine. Gandalf and Frodo. Maui and Moana. Tony Stark and Spider-Man.

This "supernatural aid" disrupts the story of the young person but ignites a new story. The sage commits to help the young person, and it changes his life. But I'd also say that the life change is mutual.

I think the Karate Kid also changed Mr. Miyagi's life. I think Frodo changed Gandalf's life.

Discipleship is mutually beneficial.

In the Bible, even before Jesus' time, discipleship was the fundamental pattern for life, especially for the people God used.

Joshua followed Moses.

Elisha followed Elijah.

Ruth followed Naomi.

Solomon followed David.

The list from the Old Testament could go on for a while.

Turn to the New Testament, and you see the same pattern playing itself out.

Timothy followed Paul.

John Mark followed Barnabas.

And before that, the disciples followed Jesus.

The pattern is so simple. Followers of God form followers of God.

But without these necessary interruptions, our lives become predictable, stagnant, even boring.

BAPTIZING BORING

I saw a study a few years back that asked unbelievers about adjectives that best describe Christians. Of course, words like judgmental and hypocritical made the list. But one word hit a chord with me because it was a big reason I didn't want to be a Christian when I was younger.

The Barna Group found that 68 percent of unbelievers would describe Christians as boring.¹⁰

I can't stand this statistic! Jesus was many things, but boring wasn't one of them.

- Boring people don't have five thousand followers flocking to hear their boring message.
- Boring people don't get approached at weddings to make the party better.
- Boring people don't get crucified for their boring beliefs.
- Boring people aren't greeted with palm branch parades when they enter cities.
- Boring people don't inspire martyrs to give up everything for their boring cause.
- Boring people don't change the world.

My point is this: our God is *not* boring! The world altered its calendar and gauged human history by everything before Christ (BC) and after Christ (AD). His life made a mark. His life made a difference. His life was everything but boring.

So here's my question. If the Christ we follow isn't boring, why in the world are we?

Growing up, I always thought Christians were decently nice people; they were just way too boring. They lacked angst. They lacked a faith that cost them anything. So when I saw this study, I could totally relate. But I think the situation is worse than it looks.

I don't think Christians are just boring. I think Christians are bored.

I think many older Christians were once born-again Christians and now they're just *bored*-again Christians. They're waiting on the

Many older Christians were once born-again Christians, and now they're just *bored*-again Christians.

next message, conference, or experience that will ignite their faith. All while the Great Commission is at their doorstep. The reality is, we are bored because we are disobedient. I bet painters who don't paint are

bored. I bet dancers who don't dance are bored. I bet writers who don't write are bored. And I'm convinced that disciples who don't disciple are bored.

It reminded me of a story my friend Chad Hennings told me about his dog named DeSoda. When his kids were very young, he got them a puppy. This puppy, like all puppies, had a ton of energy and lacked a lot of wisdom. DeSoda always tried to run away when the door opened, always tried to jump on any stranger who walked in the home, and always barked obnoxiously. Then a decade went by. DeSoda was now an old dog and no longer a young puppy. His energy was gone. His desire for adventure was gone. Heck, he didn't even care anymore when a stranger walked in the house. He would just lift his head from the mat, give them a nod, and go back to sleep. In dog years, DeSoda was really old. They were pretty sure he was going to die soon.

So the kids, now young teenagers, asked Chad, "Dad! Dad! Can we please get a new dog? *DeSoda is so boring now!* He never plays with us anymore. He just wants to sit around the house all day."

Chad conceded and got them a new puppy. And the process

repeated itself. Their new puppy, Beau, had a ton of energy and no wisdom. Except one difference was, their puppy Beau had DeSoda to show him the way. Beau and DeSoda became really good friends; they were like peas and carrots. All the puppy passion and energy in Beau would get DeSoda to do things he normally wouldn't do. DeSoda was playing outside again. He was modeling for Beau where to go to the bathroom. DeSoda was now wrestling with Beau. He had a renewed energy, and the kids could tell.

Chad told me, "The crazy thing is we thought DeSoda was going to die that year. It just wasn't looking good for him. But he ended up living four more years. And I'm convinced it was because of Beau!" Then he said a profound thing we've all heard before but never in this way. He said, "You may not be able to teach an old dog new tricks, but you can give an old dog a new puppy." I added, "And that new puppy can give an old dog a new *purpose*."

I just wonder how many old dogs in the church are bored out of their minds, and their lives would be radically changed if they'd just find a young puppy.

I've said it before and I'll say it again. We need each other.

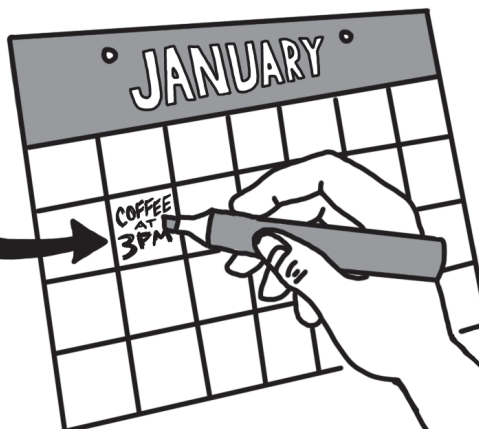
THE CHURCH DOESN'T
HAVE A *Millennial* **PROBLEM**



IT HAS A *Discipleship* **PROBLEM**



**DISCIPLESHIP
ISN'T ADDING
SOMETHING
to your calendar.**



**IT'S INCLUDING
SOMEONE ^{→IN←} your calendar.**



**CIRCLES ARE BETTER THAN
ROWS & DISCIPLES
ARE BETTER THAN CIRCLES**