



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Three Ways to Invest in the Next Generation

2 Timothy 2:2

Mario Arindaeng, Student Ministries Pastor | May 21, 2023

A few weeks ago I made a new friend. His name is Uri Creal and he is the leader of Next Moves ministry. He is passionate about seeing the next generation of young people follow Christ. He shared this with me that I just could not get off my mind these past few weeks: "There are some verses in the Bible, when you think about them, that are very comforting and peaceful and help you go to sleep at night." Then he cited Psalm 23, *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures."* Or Romans 8:39, where Paul says nothing *"will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Or Hebrews 13:5, where God says, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

Then he said, "There are some verses in the Bible that keep me up at night." He shared this verse that has just stuck with me from Judges 2:10: *"After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel."* The context of this verse is that Joshua had led the Israelites into the Promised Land. Now he has died and the elders who outlived him have also died. This is the next generation, but they didn't know anything about what the Lord had done for Israel. They didn't know who the Lord was.

So what is going to keep this verse from being a sad reality for us today? I don't know if you know this, but Europe is now seen as a post-Christian continent. One statistic out there says that in the United Kingdom alone, 70% of British young people say they have no religion, no belief in God. Many believe America is headed in the same direction, especially with the spiritual attack that is happening on our young people today.

A few weeks ago Pastor Tim shared from Ephesians 6:1-4 about all the issues our young people are facing today, from anxiety and depression, to bullying, drug addiction and teen pregnancies. I've spent a lot of time at our local high school and this past week I sat down with one of our counselors there. I asked her this question: "What issues are the students at Kaneland High School facing today?" She said, "Anxiety," but then she added a word: "Existential anxiety." I said, "What does that mean?" She said, "It's not necessarily coming out in the forefront, but at the back of what they're saying. They're saying there's no meaning or purpose in life, they feel isolated and alone, and they could die at any moment. That's what's causing our young people anxiety."

As a generation, they feel helpless and hopeless. What is the answer for our young people today? It's the gospel of Jesus Christ, isn't it? Romans 1:16—I love this verse—says, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, and then for the Gentile."*

Jesus didn't only come to save us from the hell we were headed to, but He came to save us from the hell we're going through. What is the gospel? The gospel is that God created you and me for relationship with Him. Now, that gives us purpose and meaning in life, doesn't it?

However, we all have a problem called sin that separates us from God. Sin can't be removed by good deeds, no matter how hard we try. Two thousand years ago Jesus Christ, Who is fully God and fully man, came to this earth and He lived a perfect life. Then to pay the price for our sins, Jesus died on the cross and three days later He rose from the dead. This shows that Jesus conquered sin and death, so we don't have to fear death anymore. Anyone and everyone who repents of their sin and puts their trust in Jesus alone as their Savior and Lord will have eternal life. Life with Jesus starts the moment you believe and will last forever. God promises Jesus will always be there and you will never have to feel alone.

Some of you are here this morning, hearing this message of the gospel, but you've never, ever trusted your life to Christ or surrendered to Jesus. Don't leave today without having this personal relationship with Jesus, knowing that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and rose from the dead. Today is the day you can have meaning and purpose, you can be forgiven of your sins, you can know that He's always with you, and you never, ever have to fear dying, because you trust in Jesus alone.

I don't believe America has to have the same fate as post-Christian Europe. Look back at the Great Awakening and how God sovereignly intervened in our country. There were awakenings in our country in the past and God can still do that today. God is also at work across the global South. The global South is Latin America, Africa and Asia. I don't know if you're aware, but the church of Jesus Christ is just exploding and believers in Jesus are excited about their relationship with Him. They're sharing the gospel with others. People are coming to faith in Christ.

I also have had a front-row seat of how God is even at work in Europe. Last summer my eighth-grade daughter Gwen and I went to Poland. We were a part of a mission trip there, working at an English immersion camp. Wednesday I shared the gospel and there were over a dozen Polish people, as well as Ukrainian refugees, who truly surrendered their lives to Jesus. Two of those individuals are Dominic, on the left, and Conrad, on the right.

Before they came to camp, they had some close family members who told them, "Go there and learn English, but don't follow the Jesus they're talking about. Just go there and learn English." You know what? When they heard the gospel of grace—salvation alone by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone—they said, "We get it." They surrendered their lives to Christ, knowing that when they would go back home, they would disappoint their close family members. But they said, "We've experienced this life-changing Jesus and He's worth it. There is nothing like that." God changed their lives.



God is even at work in our own student ministry. Today in our second service, Austin got baptized. He was so excited to get baptized. And in this service, you'll get to witness two more baptisms. A year and a half ago, or so, when they were in eighth grade, Charlie, who is on the left, invited Justin, who's in the middle there, to youth group. Justin started coming to youth group, and over the course of this past year, Justin entrusted his life to Christ. Then in the past few months, Justin invited his friend Xander to youth group and in just the past couple months, Xander trusted in Jesus. If you were to talk to them today, they would say, "You know what? My life has changed. I have so much joy and so much hope because of Jesus in my life." You're going to get to witness

their baptism at the end of this service. We praise God for that too.

I've also seen God working globally in our young people across the world. At the end of April, I had the privilege of going to Colorado for the Gospel-Advancing Summit. There were youth pastors and youth leaders from all over the world, from America to South Africa to Puerto Rico. I met and made many friends during this summit. There is one mission on which everyone is coming together with one goal in mind, with the mantra, "Every teen everywhere hearing the gospel from a friend." So think about that: Every teen, everywhere on the globe, hearing the gospel from a friend. We're united to see this happen globally. God is at work and there is power in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The message of the gospel transforms lives.

Not only is the message of the gospel important, but Jesus also gave us the method to bring about transformation so Judges 2:10 won't be true for us. These are familiar verses to us. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus says, "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" Making disciples is Jesus' method of transforming both our lives and the culture.

Pastor Tim shared a few weeks ago that parents are the biggest influencers in their children's lives. As parents, your primary role is to make disciples of your children. Our role as a church is to come alongside you as parents, helping the students and children here discover, develop and deploy as they become fully committed followers of Jesus Christ.

I titled today's message: "Three Ways to Invest in the Next Generation." I want to challenge and encourage all of us as a church to invest in the next generation of our children and our students. That's one level of the next generation.

Then there's another level of the next generation—people who don't know Jesus yet. That's the next generation of believers, isn't it? We need to invest in them. Whether they're children, students or adults, we need to be investing in them.

Let me give you two disclaimers:

1. When I say "next generation," I am not saying that students and children are the church of tomorrow. If they put their trust in Jesus as their Savior and Lord, they are part of the church today, aren't they? So we need to be investing in them today because they're the church today.
2. I understand that some of you maybe aren't exactly wired to work with children and students. But you know what? All of us are called to make disciples, whether it's children, students or adults. So don't tune out. This message is for all of us. Jesus calls all of us to make disciples.

Some of you are here, and you're thinking, "I hear that I'm supposed to make disciples, but I just don't know a whole lot. I'm really young in my relationship with Christ." That's okay. I want to encourage you to find a mature Christian, ask them to start pouring into you and investing in you so you can get to the point where you're making disciples. Then you can keep making disciples who make more disciples.

I want to focus the rest of this message on understanding how one important verse can really transform our whole culture and the world around us. It's 2 Timothy 2:2. The context of 2 Timothy is that Paul is on death row. He knows he's going to be executed because of his faith in Jesus Christ. This is, so to speak, Paul's last will and testament. Anytime someone offers their last words, they are really important.

There are so many important truths in 2 Timothy, but the one I want to focus on is 2 Timothy 2:2. Here Paul says to Timothy, *"And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."* There are three ways God calls us to invest in the next generation.

Investment #1 – Spend time with them.

Paul writes, *"What you have heard from me..."* We see there's been a relationship there. When Paul goes on his second missionary journey, we see in Acts 16 that he comes to the city of Lystra. In Lystra he meets Timothy and says, "Timothy, why don't you hang out with me and be my assistant and start following me?" So Timothy starts to accompany Paul.

We know that Timothy's biological father was Greek, but there's no indication that he ever became a believer in Jesus or that he was a Christian. So Paul fills the shoes of a spiritual father to Timothy. We see this in 1 Timothy 1:2, where Paul calls Timothy, *"My true son in the faith."*

Also in 2 Timothy 3:10-11, we see that Timothy was well acquainted with Paul's life. Here we read, *"You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me."* Paul spent time with Timothy and Timothy spent time with Paul—that's what discipling making is.

We have the greatest example of disciple making in Jesus, don't we? When Jesus called His 12 disciples, He said, *"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men"* (Matthew 4:18-22). When they answered yes to that call, for the next three years they followed Jesus and hung on every word Jesus said. They watched every action He did, to see what it really means to be someone who fully follows after God.

If you're going to make disciples, you would think it's common sense to spend time with them. But that's not true for everyone. I remember when I was in my early 20s and was an intern in my home church. I looked up to my senior pastor. I remember catching him in the back hall one day and saying, "Hey, would you be willing to disciple me? Would you be willing to spend time with me?"

You know what his answer was? He said, "Listen to my audio sermons." That's not how Jesus spent time with His disciples: "Just listen to my message." That's an important part of it, but it's more than that. It's spending time with them.

A couple years later I was able to meet a man who became a mentor to me. His name was Dwight Slater, and he was a missionary doctor in Cote d'Ivoire, the Ivory Coast in Africa. He came home from the field and I asked him, "Dr. Slater, would you mind spending time discipling me?" He said, "Let me pray about that and I'll get back with you." I remember receiving that phone call like it was the biggest acceptance letter to a university. He said, "I'd be honored to learn and grow along with you." Every Thursday night for two years, I went to his home, to an upper study where he had a couch. We spent two or three hours up there where we did three things together. One third of the time, we would just talk about life: how things were going in my life, how things were going in his life. The second third of our time was spent in Scripture study, talking about God's Word. Then the last third of the time we would turn around and kneel, facing the couch, and spend a half hour going back and forth, praying and talking to the Lord. That disciple-making time Dr. Slater spent with me really helped mold who I am today

When we look for people to disciple, we have to look for certain qualities in them, don't we? In 2 Timothy 2:2, it talks about "faithful men." A faithful person is someone who's reliable. I have a little acronym to give you that shows the qualities you need to look for in someone to disciple them. They need to be people who are AFTR more. The acronym is:

- **A**vailable
- **F**aithful
- **T**eachable
- **R**esponsive

Sometimes I come across people who say, "Hey, I'd love to grow." I'd say, "I'd love to spend time discipling you." But then they're too busy and are never available. They never have time. So they don't fit these qualities. Or maybe you meet with somebody and show them something in God's Word they're supposed to do. But they're like, "I'm not sure I want to do that." They're not teachable or responsive. So you look at that and realize, "If I'm going to disciple somebody, they need to be available, faithful, teachable and responsive."

Young people today are looking for adults who genuinely care about them and are willing to invest time in them. Now, it does take sacrifice and commitment. We have some great children's ministry workers and student ministry leaders who spend a lot of time investing in our young people. I want you to make sure to thank them when you see them. So is God calling you to invest time in young people? If not young people, is God calling you to invest in someone else? If it's not a child or teenager, maybe it's an adult.

Investment #2 – Study God's Word together.

Paul says, *"And what you have heard from me..."* What do you think Timothy heard from Paul? God's Word, right? There are two things in the world that last forever. Do you know what those are? It's the Word of God and people.

The Word of God lasts forever. In 1 Peter 1:25 it says, *"...but the Word of the Lord remains forever."* And people last forever. People are going to either enter into eternity in heaven with Jesus, or they're going to face an eternity in hell apart from Jesus. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus talks about the sheep and the goats. He says this to the goats on His left: *"Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels... And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life"* (Matthew 25: 41,46). The righteous sheep, those on His right, will go to eternal life. You know, if you're going to invest your life in what's important and what lasts forever, invest in God's Word and in people.

We also see the word "entrust" in 1 Timothy 2:2. Paul tells Timothy to entrust something to them. Entrust brings the idea of something that's really special, a valuable treasure. What we're entrusting is God's Word. We are to entrust the treasure of the eternal Word of God into the hands of eternal people.

I want to talk about the difference between formal discipleship and informal discipleship. Formal discipleship is when you take time and study God's Word. So if you're in a small group, that's formal discipleship, formally talking about God's Word. I know our

women's ministry has a lot of formal discipleship happening. I was talking to Amanda Badal who reports there are over 20 women who have been mentored through formal discipleship.

I often get asked the question, when it comes to studying God's Word, "What are we to study?" Even this past week I was asked, "Hey, do you know of a good devotional for students or young adults?" You know what I think is the best thing to do? There are a lot of great resources that are good to use, but just read God's Word. That's what we need to do.

I have a pastor friend in Detroit who shared this with me about where to begin: "The books of John, Romans and 2 Timothy. The book of John because it's the gospel and focuses on the life of Jesus and the importance of believing in Jesus. Then Romans is good to study because it shows the riches and depths of our salvation. Finally, 2 Timothy is a good third book to study because it was written at the end of Paul's life, so it shows us what he thought was really important at this stage in his life."

We also need to informally disciple other people. What does that mean? Informally means going through life together as you're walking along the road. Parents, we're supposed to informally disciple our children all the time. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (NIV) says:

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

This is talking about how parents just talk about God's Word as they're going through life. I know some of my best conversations with my kids are when we're in the car. All of a sudden we get in a gospel conversation or a conversation about the Bible as they ask questions. That's what informal discipleship is.

This is not just for parents with children. We should be having these informal conversations about God's Word with one another as adults. I like to ask people, "What's your 'God thought' for today?" In other words, "What's God teaching you from His Word? What's God doing in your life lately?" The reality is, if we're really in God's Word, we should at any moment's notice have a God thought ready to be shared with somebody else, shouldn't we? So simply ask, "What's your God thought?" That's what informal discipleship is.

Investment #3 – Share God's vision to multiply.

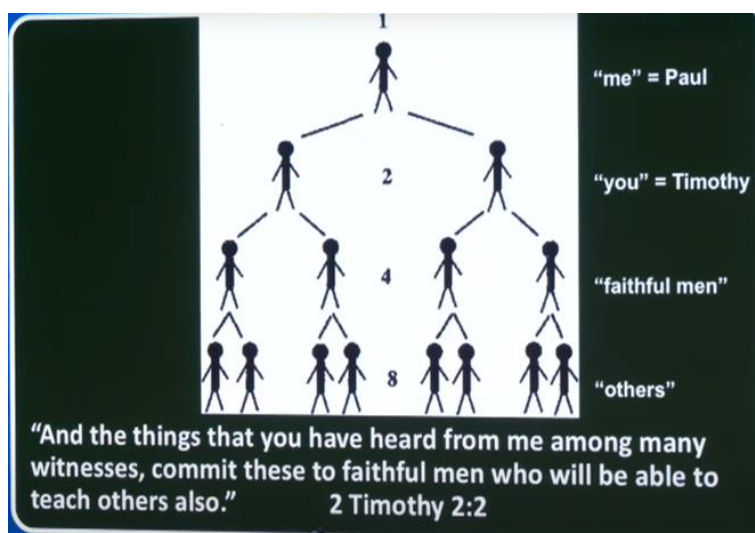
Not only are we to spend time with others, not only are we to study God's Word together, but the third way to invest in the next generation is to share God's vision to multiply. We hear the word 'discipleship' and think it's about Christian character—and that's absolutely true. But if we stop there, we fall short of what Jesus has called us to do. He's called us to multiply.

Dann Spader is the founder of Sonlife Ministries, which is a disciple-making ministry. He shares this:

Our command is not discipleship, but disciple making. Discipleship normally refers to what you do with Christians. The term 'discipleship' makes people think of deeper Bible studies or weightier content for Christians. This is important, but it isn't our mandate. Our mandate is disciple making, which is the whole process from unbeliever to fully trained—reproducing disciple maker.

As you think about 2 Timothy 2:2, I want you to think about how many generations of disciples there are in that verse. If you look carefully, you'll see there are four. Paul says, *"What you have heard from me..."* So the 'me' is Paul, and the 'you' is Timothy. That's the second generation. Then he says, *"...entrust to faithful men,"* which is the third generation, *"who will be able to teach others also,"* which is the fourth generation.

In our lives, we need to be making disciples who make disciples. Can you say of your life, "I have fully disciplined somebody so that they have multiplied and disciplined someone else, and they've disciplined someone else"? We should be having great-grandchildren disciples in our lives. We need to think differently.



We need to go from addition to multiplication, meaning if you were a great evangelist—someone who is able to share the gospel with someone, as we all should be doing—and you lead someone to Christ every day for one year, you would lead 365 people to Jesus in one year. That's awesome. At the end of two years, it would be 730 people, at the end of 32 years, you'd lead 11,680 to Christ. That would be an awesome thing, wouldn't it?

But if you are a discipler and lead just one person to Christ, then poured into them for one whole year, at the end of that first year there would be two of you who are disciple makers. Then you'd say, "Here's the vision. Let's split off after this year, then you disciple someone and I'll disciple somebody for the next year." Then you would have four people after two years, eight people after three years. Guess what? In 32 years, you will have reached five billion people, which is the world's population.

Here's the thing too. If you're just leading one person a day to Christ, like the evangelist does, all you're doing is creating a bunch of babies. How are you going to feed 365 babies? You can't, right? You'll be leaving them as spiritual babies. But if you're a discipler, you're leading them to Christ, then you're teaching them how to feed themselves so they can feed others. Then they can grow and disciple others. That's what we need to do. We need to go from addition to multiplication when it comes to disciple making.

We're all looking for our purpose in life. I am confident that the one purpose God has given each of us as believers in Jesus Christ is to be disciple makers. I see this happening in our student ministry. Brandon Stoneburg is one of our youth leaders. He's been discipling these high school boys for a few years now. Two boys who graduated a year ago were Johnny Pilkington and Noah Vandervord. And now this past year, they have been co-leading the ninth-grade boys with him. So Brandon is pouring into Johnny and Noah, as all three of them are pouring into the ninth-grade boys. Now we start to see some of that generational multiplication even happening in our student ministry. We need to give our young people, the people we're discipling, a vision to multiply.

I want to ask are you making disciples? Some of you have been believers for a long time, but are you making disciples who make disciples who make disciples? I want to encourage you to ask the Lord today, "Where do You want me to start? Do You want me to start by investing in young people, students and children, or other adults who need help being discipled?" Who is that in your life? Start going down that road of making disciples of others.

There are others of you here today who are saying, "I'm not ready to be a discipler yet because I'm still young." I want to encourage you to find a mature Christian and say, "Hey, would you be willing to spend time pouring into me, helping me be a fully devoted follower of Christ?"