**Preaching to Multiply the Number of 18-Year-Old Disciples**

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**The Crisis**

1. A synthesis of credible research reveals that about 50 percent of those who attended church growing up leave the church after high school, about 40 percent remain in the church but do not make any kingdom impact, and only about 10 percent walk in faith and make a kingdom impact for a lifetime.
2. The American church is following close behind the church in Western Europe. If that trend continues, the American church increasingly will see shrinking congregations, declining evangelism, and little cultural impact.
3. If the American church cannot even launch the children of the church into a life of discipleship, then the church can have little hope for impact on the nation and world.
4. Marshaling the entire church to begin making many more eighteen-year-old disciples may be the most strategic way to move from the current crisis to vibrant churches impacting their communities and world for the glory of God.

**A Vision for the Future**

Dr. Ronnie Floyd's Vision 2025 contains five major strategic actions for the SBC to take on over the next five years:

* Add 500 missionaries.
* Add 6,000 new SBC churches.
* Increase the total number of workers in the field through a new emphasis on "calling out the called," and then preparing those the Lord calls out.
* **Turn around the ongoing decline in the SBC in reaching, baptizing, and discipling 12- to 17-year-olds.**
* Surpass $500 million given through the Cooperative Program.

**Defining an 18-Year-Old Disciple**

1. The senior pastor, with the assistance of the student pastor, can meet with core leaders, parents, and teenagers to create a biblical description of an eighteen-year-old disciple of King Jesus.

Eric Geiger and Jeff Borton: "In our observations of student ministries, we discovered that most student ministries have not determined what type of student they seek to build." (*Simple Student Ministry*, 37)

Ed Newton and Scott Pace: "[I]n order to effectively design a youth ministry that accomplishes God's mission and vision for the church and produces healthy young disciples, we must establish a 'target student.'" (*Student Ministry by the Book*, 45–46)

1. Pastors can lead key groups to refine and embrace that definition.
2. Then they can lead the entire church to adopt that description and to commit every church member to make many more of those disciples.

**Preaching to Multiply the Number of 18-Year-Old Disciples**

1. **Lost students do not become disciples.**
2. ***Great preaching* makes more disciples by effectively introducing more students to Jesus.**

Call the names of teenagers.

 Calling one name gets the attention of the entire group.

Enlist someone to help you know what teenagers are currently thinking and feeling.

Fears, joys, tragedies, victories, hopes, pain

Tie the gospel to a life that matters.

 This generation hungers for that, and they have not found it.

Tie the gospel to a cause for which teenagers would lay down their lives.

 The whales are nice, but few teenagers would die for them.

1. **Students soaked in moral therapeutic deism do not become disciples.**

Many believing students tend to know Jesus primarily as a friend who brings them good things. Their primary testimony is, "He's always there for me."

Worst case, some students may see Jesus as their little buddy who rides with them in their shirt pocket. He always is there in case they need to pull Him out to "poof" some difficulty away. But the problem is students may believe they can return Him to their pocket—conveniently out of sight and out of mind until needed again.

To be blunt, many teenage believers need to meet God's Son again. As they do, they may feel as if it were happening for the first time, because of how far from His glory many have wandered.

1. ***Great preaching* makes more disciples by turning the eyes of students from self to the King.**

Teenagers move from self to King Jesus through preaching rich in high Christology.

Such preaching proclaims Christ as:

* **Sovereign Son of the Father**, reigning at His right hand forever and ever
* **Triumphant Victor** over sin, death, and Hades
* **Glorious Conqueror**, the dominating personality for all ages to come
* **Unequivocal Commander** of heaven's hosts, ready to obey His every word
* **Indisputable Judge** of peoples and nations, to whom all must give an account
* **Undeniable Ruler** of history, overseeing its path and its outcome from beginning to end
* **Incomparable King of an Empire** who ultimately will fill creation with His power and piety
* **Irreplaceable Head and Heart** of a people whom He has bought with His own blood
* **Reigning Redeemer of the Church** universal, militant and triumphant
* **Supreme Lord** in this moment just as fully as He will be Supreme Lord at the End

Proclaim the centrality of Christ vs. the supremacy of Christ.

See an amazing number of sermon resources on high Christology at ChristNow.com.

1. **Congregations that consider students an appendage to the church do not make more disciples.**

Teenagers who only connect with peers and a few youth leaders generally will not walk in faith in adulthood. Those who spend their teenage years with multiple heart connections with believers of all ages—and those who serve King Jesus with believers of all ages—probably will.

1. ***Great preaching* makes more disciples by calling the entire congregation to connect with and invest in a young generation.**

In most churches, only the senior pastor has the leadership strength to mobilize the church family to envelop every teenager in warm relationships and to involve every teenager in intergenerational ministry.

More eighteen-year-olds become true disciples of Jesus when the full congregation warmly loves, values, and shares in discipling the young generation. The pastors equip all church members to have some role in building relationships with and spiritually influencing the young.

The senior pastor proclaims from the pulpit that in both the Old Testament and New Testament eras, all of God's people shared in spiritually forming the young.

1. God commanded parents to celebrate Passover with their children. Exodus 12:24-27
2. God commanded Israel to worship with their children in the Feast of Weeks. Deuteronomy 16:9-11
3. God commanded Israel to worship with their children in the Feast of Tabernacles. Deuteronomy 16:13-14, 31:9-13
4. Families worshipped together during the time of Joshua. Joshua 8:34-35
5. Families repented together during the time of Ezra. Ezra 10:1
6. God commanded Israel to worship with their children during the time of Joel. Joel 2:15-16
7. Believers included children in the church services in the book of Acts. Acts 20:7-12
8. Believers included children in the church services in Ephesus and Colossae. Ephesians 6:1-3, Colossians 3:20. Paul wrote his letters to be read to the full church, including children.

**General Principles**

Teenagers evaluate your preaching based on **Passion, Knowledge**, and **Character.**

**Passion**

* Is my pastor passionate about his topic?
* Does he really care about that subject?
* Does my pastor really care about me?

**Knowledge**

* Does my pastor know this subject?
* Does the pastor's subject make sense?
* Are my pastor's facts correct?
* Does my pastor understand something about my life?
* Does my pastor know how this subject could change or affect my life?

**Character**

* Can I trust my pastor?
* Is my pastor honest in his preaching?
* Does my pastor model what he is preaching?
* Will becoming disappointed in my pastor cause me to ignore his teaching?