

Discipleship Moment

Text: Revelation 3:1-6

The book of Revelation is one of my favorite books of the Bible (most books of the Bible are one of my favorites). There are big, bright, shocking images of creatures, angels, dragons, battles, and a victorious, bloody Lamb. These creative images wake us up from our sleepy Bible reading. When we become tired of words like “redemption,” “sin,” and “salvation,” the Revelation uses creativity and stark, terrifying images of whores, beasts, and war. It really is a spectacular book. And the phrase “wake up” is in the middle of our text for this week. This command, “wake up” could be the subtitle of the book of Revelation. When we’re lulled into the same old, same old religious language, Revelation grabs by the collar: WAKE UP.

We heard yesterday about the ministry that David Martin is doing in Germany with the Aquila Initiative: a training program for church planters. The most surprising thing is that this missionary work is being done in Germany. When we think about mission work we think about third world countries, communities that have not heard the Gospel. But here, in the place that Martin Luther himself walked and taught and preached, is the need for missionaries and missions work. This serves as a surprising WAKE UP for us.

How is it, in just a few generations, a faithful people can lose their love for Jesus? This is a great question, and one that we must face as a church. We have almost 700 members at New Life, and most of those members are grandparents. We average about 300-400 attendance on a weekend at our worship services. It seems to me, statistically, that we are falling into the same pattern that Germany has: a faithful generation has failed to pass on the faith effectively.

Sara and I just had our second child, Ambrose, this week. And this is the 30th great grandchild of Sara’s grandmother, Mary. Mary has 5 children, those 5 children have 13 children, those 13 children have 30 children. That is 48 people that Mary has influence over.

Now imagine this: let’s say we have 150 sets of grandparents at New Life Lutheran (we have much more than that in reality), and those 150 sets of grandparents have, on average, a family of 24 people (that is half the size of Sara’s family). If those 150 sets of grandparents effectively passed on the faith to their families, that would make our influence 300 (the grandparents) + 3600 (the family members). That would mean we could have influence on 3900 people simply because of family connections.

Even if over half of those family members didn’t live in the area, we would have a membership and influence far more than we do now. The problem of faithful transmission of the faith plagues the church. And we must find a way to communicate the faith to a new generation: a generation that doesn’t know the Gospel. A generation that was not faithfully given the Gospel, and now has all sorts of influences and ideas about truth and spirituality and flourishing.

We must innovate new ways to preach and new ways to do ministry. And innovation is not the cause of low attendance, but innovation must be done *because* of low attendance. We need Revelation more than ever, we need to wake up, we need faithfulness, and we need creativity.

Going Deeper

Use this resource to start conversations about this week's sermon for your personal devotions, with your family, or with your Life Group. You can use one question per day or all at once

1. Have you read the book of Revelation recently? Read Revelation 2-3.
2. What do you think was going on in these 7 churches that Jesus wanted to give messages like "wake up," "you lost your first love," "I wish you were either hot or cold"? Why would Jesus need to give these messages to these churches?
3. Which church in Revelation 2-3 do you think is most like New Life? Why?
4. Why do you think there is such a generational drop-off in attendance? How could the Gospel have been taught more effectively?
5. Read this article on the different living generations today: <https://www.marketingteacher.com/the-six-living-generations-in-america/>
6. How can we effectively minister and teach the Gospel to the Millennial generation and Generation Z?