

Finding God Among Our Idols

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Preacher: Eric Scott

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. That was not bad, but we'll try it one more time. Good morning. Much better. My name is Eric. If you don't know me, I'm the youth director here at Watermark Church.

I'm really excited to get to share with you guys today. If you were here earlier in the year, back like January to March maybe, we did a series called God's Story, Our Story. And in that series, we basically looked at the big story of the Bible from like 30,000 feet and just flew through some highlights to try and get a picture of how all of the Bible fits together into one big story.

And what happened in that is we would jump like 400 years in between stories from one week to the next. And it meant that we covered the whole Bible in like 10 weeks, but we skipped a whole bunch of stuff in the process. And so over the summer, what we're going to do is we're going to go back and we're going to hit one of those 400 year periods that we skipped, which is the time of Judges.

And we're going to spend five weeks looking at the book of Judges and seeing how the stories from the book of Judges actually connects to our lives today, sort of filling in the gaps. And hopefully it'll be set up so that if you're here for just one or two weeks, that one or two weeks can be a good sermon that connects with you. And if you're here for all five weeks, then it's building and connecting to your life in different ways each week. And we're going to start looking at the story of Judges in what may seem like a strange place, but it really isn't, and you'll see why, which is the gospel.

Now, if you've been to Watermark before, you've heard this word before. We use it a lot around here. We say the gospel is what should be guiding our lives. We say the gospel is how we become Christians.

[1 : 4 5] Christians, but I think, I could be wrong, but I think there's a lot of people who have been in Watermark for a while, who've been around Watermark for a while, who if we brought you up here right now and said, please explain to us what the gospel is, would be pretty uncomfortable and not quite sure what to say. So I want to take a few minutes and just go through what is the gospel and then show how the gospel actually gives us a framework for us to look at as we go through the book of Judges.

So in a very simple form, the gospel is the good news that God saves sinners through the death and resurrection of Jesus. So there's good news that God saves sinners through the death and resurrection of Jesus. But if you need a little more of an explanation, we're going to explain it a little more deeply. That's what I was looking for with some visual aids. And so we have six pictures here that sort of illustrate the gospel for us. The first one, you'll see a crown up there in the corner. That represents God. The gospel is first and foremost, a story about God. God is good. God is generous. And out of that goodness and generosity, he creates. He creates the world. That's the little circle in the picture. And he creates man in his image to rule over the world under his rule. See how we're under the crown. And that is how God created the world to function, with us ruling the world under his ultimate rule. But something went wrong. We rejected God's rule. That's why there's an X through the crown. And we said, we want to rule ourselves. We don't want you to tell us how to live our lives, God. We can handle that. We've got this. And when we did that, we stepped out from under God's rule. And we failed to rule ourselves or the world properly. There was a problem. There was the goodness that was created to be there ceased to be there. And God, being just, couldn't let our rebellion go on forever. Which is why in the third picture, the guy is dead. Because the consequences for sin are death. So God creates good, we rebel, and death is our consequence. But the good news is that the story doesn't end with God's justice. God, in his love, steps down into the earth. He sends Jesus, the J, who's fully God and fully man, into the earth as a man. And unlike all of us, Jesus submits perfectly to God's rule. Jesus lives perfectly like we are supposed to, but none of us have.

And the world around him sees this perfection and they hate it. They can't stand it. And so they kill him on a cross. That's why his arms are stretched out in the picture. And what happens when he dies is that he didn't deserve death because he was perfect. We deserve death. But because he died, although he didn't deserve to, he takes our place. And we're offered a new life in him. We're offered forgiveness and restoration in our relationship with God through him. And God didn't leave Jesus dead. He raised him up, brought him back to life, a literal, physical, new body, and then raised him up to heaven where Jesus is now ruling over the world. That's why there's the J in the crown in the fifth picture. He's ruling over the world. He's guiding us today. If we're his people, he's giving us hope to sustain us from day to day. And the thing is, not everyone gets to experience this new life. The sixth picture, you see there's two people with two different size crowns.

There's one response where you can say, forget this. I want to live by my own rules. I want to continue to rule myself, even though I know that leads to death. Or we can submit and say, I want to submit to God's rule. I want to trust in Jesus for forgiveness. There's two ways to live, our way or God's way. And if you want this on your phone, there's actually an app that you can download.

[5 : 55] It's called Two Ways to Live in the App Store. So you can click that and download it. And it'll explain it to you with the pictures and words and everything so that you can have it nice and handy.

But if you're here and you've ever read or heard anything about the book of Judges, you're probably a little confused right now. Why are we starting with a story about Jesus when we're talking about Judges, which was written like a thousand years before Jesus lived? And here's why. Because this framework of the gospel gives us a structure by which we can explain the book of Judges and every other scenario in our lives. Basically, what we have here is we have creation. What is the ideal?

What is the world supposed to look like? We have the fall. What goes wrong? We have the consequences. What happens? How does that lead to death? We have salvation. How does Jesus step in and change that story? We have hope. How does Jesus continually provide us with a new framework for living? And then we have a response. Are we going to choose our way, which leads to death, or God's way, which leads to life? And really, like I said, you can plug this in with any story in life. Work. What's the creation story that so many people in Hong Kong have for work? I want to work hard so I can provide for my family and retire and enjoy life someday. But it goes wrong. Something goes wrong. Maybe you get laid off from your job. Or maybe you have a job, but it doesn't actually pay enough for you to be able to provide for your family like you want to. Or maybe you have this boss who forces you to work crazy, insane, long hours. And it leads to death. Maybe it leads to a broken relationship with your family because you're spending so much time at the office that you just don't have time to invest in those relationships. Maybe it leads to physical death. If you go to any hospital in Hong Kong, there are so many people there who are there because they just got stressed out from working too hard and their bodies could no longer handle it. That happens every day in Hong Kong. And so this ideal world doesn't work out. It leads to some type of death in our lives. But then when we see Jesus, that changes the story. That gives us hope. That shows us a God who will provide for us so that we don't need to kill ourselves trying to provide. That gives us a God who we can root our identity in so that even if we can't set the standard of living that we want for the family, we don't need to despair and question who we are. And it gives us a hope day to day that we're able to go to our job. We're able to work hard, but we're not having that define us. We're not having our identity shaped by whether or not we're able to make millions of dollars every month. And we have a response. We can live our way.

We can break relationships. We can stress ourselves out. We can end up dying in some way or other. Or we can die to ourselves and live God's way and have a hope that we can go to work with every day.

And really, you can plug anything in life into this outline and it fits. Sex, work, family, goals, dreams, school, anything fits into this outline. And the book of Judges also fits into this outline.

[9 : 30] Because what happens over and over and over again in the book of Judges is the nation of Israel, who is created as God's special people, chooses some story of reality other than God's story that they want to follow. They turn, they worship idols, they rebel against God, it leads to death. He sends in plunderers who capture them and hold them captive, who take all of their goods and their slaves.

They cry out to God and God sends saviors who come and rescue his people and guide them in obedience to God. And the people obey God until that rescuer dies. And then they're faced with a choice. Are we going to continue following God or are we going to go back to following our own ways? And again and again and again in the book of Judges, what we're going to see is that the nation of Israel continually turns against God and just repeats the cycle over and over and over again.

Now there's a big difference between the book of Judges and the story of Jesus in the sense that in the book of Judges, the saviors are human. They're fallen just like us. And they can never bring the ultimate salvation that the nation of Israel needs. And so what happens is in every story in the book of Judges, we have a shadow of the ultimate gospel. We have a mini gospel, maybe we can call it, where we can see a picture of what Christ is going to do, but we have a savior who falls short of what Jesus is ultimately going to accomplish and who leaves us longing for something more.

And so in the book of Judges, we're supposed to be left with this hunger for Jesus, this hunger for the savior who will come and bring the rescue that his people really need in full. And so now that we have this framework, I'd like to jump into today's actual passage and see how this framework and this passage fit together and how this will lead us as we look through the book of Judges during the rest of the summer. And what we're going to see in today's passage, again, Israel forgets the gospel, they turn to idols, they rebel against God, there are consequences, but then God steps in and he saves his people.

So, Judges chapter 2, verse 6. When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land. Now, a little recap in the Bible story up to this point. Israel was the descendants of a man named Jacob. Jacob had a son named Joseph who had been sold into slavery by his brothers, but then became the number two in command in the nation of Egypt. A famine came and the whole family moved down to Egypt because Joseph said that he would provide for them and take care of them, and he did.

[12 : 31] They settled there. They got comfortable there. A few generations went by. The Egyptians forgot about who Joseph was and realized there are these foreigners in our land, and they're multiplying very fast, and they're intimidating us. We need to make them slaves so that they can't hurt us. And so, the nation of Israel became slaves in the land of Egypt, and they stayed as slaves for 400 years. After 400 years of slavery, they called out to God, and God sends a man named Moses to come rescue them. Moses goes up to Pharaoh and says, let my people go. And Pharaoh says, no. And then God sends plagues and eventually rescues his people from Egypt. And if you are an Old Testament Jew, this is the ultimate salvation story.

This is the ultimate picture of what Jesus is going to do someday. You have the Passover, which is basically the night where every Israelite family killed a lamb, put its blood on the door, and the firstborn son of that family was rescued, while the firstborn son of every family in Egypt died. You have a lamb that gets killed in place of the firstborn son, and the people are set free from their slavery through the death of these lambs. It's a picture of what's going to happen someday with Jesus, the lamb of God who is killed for our sins, who sets us free from our slavery to sin. And so, for the Israelites, this is the big salvation event of the Old Testament. If you read the Old Testament, basically anything up to about there in the Bible, and you see anything in there that says God is our Savior, or God brings salvation to his people, no Old Testament Israelite could write those words without the Passover being in their mind. It was a big deal to those people. And so, the Passover happens. Israel is set free from Egypt.

Moses leads the people out into the desert, ready to bring them into the promised land, and the people say, no, we're scared. The people in the promised land are too big. They're too strong. We can't beat them. And God says, they didn't listen to me. They disobeyed. I told them to go into the promised land, and they didn't. And so, because of that, they get to stay in the desert for 40 years. And anyone aged 20 or above gets to die in the desert and never see the promised land. 40 years go by. The generation dies off. Moses, the leader, dies off. And Joshua, Moses' number two in command, takes control of the nation. He brings them across into the promised land. He leads their armies into battle and conquers all of the neighboring nations. And right now, as we pick up this story, he's sending the people of Israel off to live in their inheritance. And for the first time in almost 500 years, the nation of Israel has a home of their own and is comfortable.

The first time in almost 500 years, the nation of Israel has a home of their own and is comfortable. And at this point, they're still following God, but it's not going to last long.

We have verse 7. The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the leaders, or of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel. As long as the people had strong spiritual leadership to point them towards God, they continued to obey God. As soon as the strong spiritual leadership died out, their obedience and faith disappeared. What happens is, Joshua served God. Joshua raised up the next generation to serve God as well. That generation was powerful enough that during their lifetime, everyone else followed their lead, but they didn't train up the next generation. They expected everyone to sort of just catch it, and the next generation didn't.

[16 : 55] And so as soon as these leaders were out of the picture, the nation turned away from God, which is a scary thing because in the nation of Israel, there were many, many safeguards built into the daily life of the people to help them remember, to help them remember who God was and what God had done for them, how he had rescued them. And yet in less than 100 years, it disappears, this memory.

They had priests whose job was to remind the people of who God was and what he had done for them and how they should respond to them. They had festivals and holidays. They celebrated the Passover every year as a way of reminding themselves, like we just took communion, they would take Passover every year to remember how God had rescued them from the land of Egypt. They had a feast of booths where they would remember how God had provided for them for 40 years through the wilderness, how he had given them food to eat in the desert and sent them water out of the rocks and taken care of them the entire process, every step of the way. They had the Sabbath day. Once a week, they had a day that was specially set aside for them to remember who God was and how he had saved them from Egypt. And as if that wasn't enough, they had this prayer called the Shema, that every Israelite parent was supposed to teach their children repetitively. You may not have heard the word Shema before, but you've probably heard the prayer. It goes like this, hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind. And the parents were supposed to teach that to their kids when they sat down to eat dinner and when they put their kids to bed and when they got their kids ready in the morning and when they were traveling together over and over and over so that no one forgot it.

And yet less than 100 years after this great salvation experience of Israel, the memory is gone. And the problem with forgetting the gospel is that God has a very specific way of working in the Bible.

It's a pattern that he repeats over and over and over again, where first he saves, then he calls for obedience. First he rescues his people, then he calls them to follow him. It happens here. He saves Israel from the land of Egypt and then after they've been set free, he gives them the law in the desert. It's the same thing today. He sends Jesus on the cross to forgive us for everything we've done wrong and only after forgiving us does he call us to live for him. If you look in the Bible in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 through 10, it talks about, for by grace are you saved, that's total unmerited favor from God, nothing that we've done to earn it. Through faith, meaning that we get it by believing, not by doing anything to earn it. And it's the gift of God, totally free, not by works, in case you missed that in the rest of the verse, so that no one can boast because there's absolutely nothing that we've done to earn it or make it our own. But then he goes on and he says, for you are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works. So basically God saves us for free out of his own goodwill so that we will obey him. The pattern is God saves first and then he calls for obedience. And it's the same thing here. He saved them from Egypt. He calls them to obedience.

And when they forget how God has saved them from Egypt and they forget who God is, their obedience quickly flies out the window because the root that's supposed to inspire their obedience is gone. And also notice this process of turning from God, it's not an all-at-once thing.

[21 : 06] Joshua, first generation, sees the amazing things that God does. Sees God save Israel from Egypt. Sees him lead them through the wilderness. And he is committed. First generation, committed. He trains up the next generation. The next generation has seen some of it. They've heard the rest from Joshua.

And they trust. And they obey. But they're not as committed as the first generation because they don't train up the third generation. They become complacent. So first generation, committed. Second generation, complacent. And then the third generation follows for a little bit until the second generation dies off and realizes that they've had all these rules that they've been following their whole lives, but they don't understand why. And when they divorce the rules from the God of the rules, and they see only the rules without the God who saved them, who has their best interest at heart in giving them the rules, and they just see the rules, they say, forget this. Why should we follow these rules?

They're confused, and they compromise the gospel, and they give it up. So it's a process. First generation is committed. Second generation is complacent. Third generation, confused and compromised.

And that's very common in the world today, right? If you've been following the news at all this past week in America, lots and lots of people are crying out, what happened to our country's morals?

Right? And basically, there's a process. One generation believed the gospel and believed its implications. The next generation sort of believes the gospels, follows its implications, but doesn't teach the next generation what the gospel is. And then all of a sudden, you have a generation that forgets God, and our behavior is just reflecting the fact that we don't believe in God anymore. That's the pattern in the world that's so, so common. And that's why, one of the reasons why it's so important for us as the church to be explicit about the gospel, to be clear and repetitive in telling the next generation about the gospel because the stakes are literally life and death.

[23 : 43] It's literally a matter of whether people will know God for eternity or be separated from him forever. So if you're a parent, I cannot urge you enough, please talk to your kids about the gospel.

Be clear about it. Don't just assume that spending time at church each week will get it through to them. Like, think about it. I'm in charge of the youth here. When we have the kids in class, we try very, very hard to teach them God's truth, and the kids' ministry does too.

But the thing is, we have them in class for maybe 45 minutes a week. And then outside, there's 167 hours that you guys are in charge of. And if we're teaching them God's truth for 45 minutes a week, and then they spend 167 hours a week having a different message taught to them, which one's going to stick?

And so please, if you're a parent, talk with your kids about the gospel. Reinforce what they're learning here. And if you have youth-age kids, we actually have our youth lessons parallel what the sermon is on, so that it's very easy for you to talk to your kids, because you've just heard about the same thing. And if you don't feel comfortable talking to your kids, or you feel like you aren't mature enough yourself, please come talk to me or Chris Thornton after service, and we would love to talk with you about how we can get you equipped, and how we can get you to the point where you're ready to do that. Because passing on the gospel, this good news of what Jesus has done for us to the next generation, is incredibly important. And if we don't believe that yet, let's look at what happens to the Israelites when they forget. Jump to verse 10.

All the generation were gathered to their fathers. There arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them, and they provoked the Lord to anger.

[25 : 59] They abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtaroath. When they forget the gospel, they abandon the God of the gospel. And each of us is created and designed to worship. Each of us needs to worship. So when we reject the God of the gospel, when we stop worshipping the true God, there's a worship void, a worship vacuum in our hearts, and we fill it with something else. With the Israelites, they filled it with Baal and Ashtaroath, which were basically just false gods that the nations around them worshiped. Every individual city had their own Baal, it looked a little different in each city and really just reflected the culture of the people there. There were two main things that every one of the Baals had in common.

First, if you wanted to be economically comfortable, you needed to worship Baal. Because the people in those days, as part of doing business with you, they would make sure that you worshipped the same God as them. So if you wanted to do a business deal, you might have to like make a sacrifice or bow down to their God. Which seems really archaic, but I think is actually way too prevalent in today's world too.

Think about how many bosses in Hong Kong require their employees to bend the rules just a little bit for the God of money. How many Christians are willing to just go along with that because that's what it takes to make a profit in today's world. How many schools in Hong Kong require their teachers to teach the school's stance on sexuality, even if that's wildly different than the Bible's stance? And how many teachers are willing to compromise what they're teaching in order to get these jobs at these prestigious top schools? How many jobs just have rules that you have to work crazy long hours and reject your family, forsake your family for the sake of the God of money? And how many Christians in Hong Kong follow that God rather than prioritizing the God of the Bible and their families?

It's the same thing today, just packaged a little bit differently. If you want to serve, if you want to be economically comfortable in Hong Kong, in some way you're probably going to have to serve the gods of Hong Kong.

It's not an idol that you can bow down to necessarily all the time. It might be money, it might be power. But generally, if we want to be economically comfortable, it's going to require compromise in some way.

[28 : 47] Not always. There are plenty of great ways that you can make a huge profit and provide for your family without compromising. But there are also many, many, many ways where the culture calls us to compromise for the sake of fitting in and being comfortable. The second thing that the Baals had in common is that they were fertility gods. They were storm gods. And so what would happen in worship of Baal is you would come into the Baal's temple and you would have sex. Because they believed that if you had sex in front of Baal, then Baal would imitate you and make your crops grow. And so what happened in Israel when they turned from God and they turned to Baal, they did it for the sake of economic comfort and sexual liberation. Worshipping Baal rather than God was comfortable, it was easy, it allowed them to live very comfortable lives economically, sexually, they could have fun, they could enjoy life. Nothing was wrong.

Except for the fact that they had rejected God and were now under his wrath. It says, The anger of the Lord, verse 14, was kindled against them and he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them. He sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for harm, as the Lord had warned, and as the Lord had sworn to them, and they were in terrible distress. This is the third picture up there.

The consequences, the death. Israel turned from God. Israel forsook God, despite all of the great salvation that he had brought to them, and they turned and instead worshipped the idols of the nations around them, and God was angry and God sent consequences. God is just. God can't let our rebellion or their rebellion go unpunished. And so their idolatry led to slavery. It's always the pattern in our lives. When we turn to something other than God to satisfy what only God can satisfy, it always leaves us enslaved. Because our idols, whether that's money, sex, comfort, power, whatever, can never follow through on the promises that they hold out to us. And they always constantly demand more and more and more and make us their slaves and never follow through with their promises.

The great irony of Israel here is that the nations that took them captive are the same nations whose gods they were worshipping rather than the true God. They thought that by blending in and fitting in, they'd have true freedom. And yet they ended up as slaves.

And then we see an incredible response from God in verse 16. Then the Lord raised up judges who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. In Israel's suffering, in Israel's time of need, God doesn't stand back and say, well, you deserve it.

[31 : 56] God sends rescuers. God sends saviors to free his people from the hand of the captors. God doesn't say, I'll save you when you fix yourselves. God says, I'll save you because I love you.

Because that's my nature. I'm gracious. I'm forgiving. And so I'm going to give you another chance. And throughout the book of Judges, this cycle is going to happen again and again and again. Israel forgets God.

Israel turns from God. Israel follows idols. They disobey God. He sends them into captivity or into the hands of plunderers. And then he rescues them. And it's so often that our lives follow a very similar pattern. And remember, with Judges, each of the rescuers that God sends is a mini picture of what Jesus ultimately is going to do for us. Someone who comes in. Someone who saves and rescues.

But with the Judges, they're not quite there. They're also fallen. They're also making mistakes. And the further you get into the book of Judges, the more mistakes each ruler will make. And the more hungry each of them is intended to leave us for Jesus, the true ruler, who will come in and truly deal with our greatest enemy and our greatest captor, sin and death.

So I want to spend the rest of our time together today talking about how this story connects to our world. There's a couple things I want to see. The first is that we need to remember the gospel and that we need to let that lead us to worship. We need to remember the gospel. God's pattern is that he saves us first and then calls us to follow him. And if we forget what he has done to save us, it's only a matter of time before we turn completely away from him. Israel had this amazing salvation experience where a million people were led out of slavery in a foreign land through the desert and into their own land. Yet within a hundred years, they'd forgotten.

[34 : 12] The grandkids of the people who had been brought out of Egypt turned away from God. It doesn't take long. It doesn't happen overnight, but it doesn't take long. And we are constantly in danger of being one or two generations away from forgetting the gospel.

And it's so important, I can't stress enough, to pass on this message and to remember it in our own lives. You know, the crazy thing is for the Israelites here, they saw God rescue them and they saw God forgive them again and again and again. And they understood that God was just. But for us, we live in a time where we can see how God is able to forgive us over and over and over again and maintain his justice.

And the way that he does that is by taking all of his anger towards us and our sin and pouring it out on Jesus on the cross. The way that God is able to be just and to forgive us is by taking all of the justice that we deserve and pouring it on himself. Israel had a great and amazing salvation when they were rescued from Egypt. But our salvation through Jesus is so much better.

The way that God has rescued us, the way that God has sacrificed himself and poured out his wrath on himself for us is so much better. And if it was important for Israel to remember the way that God had saved them from Egypt, it is so much more important for us to remember now.

The way that God saves us from our sins. This needs to lead us to worship. And I'm not talking about just singing songs. I'm talking about living lives that reflect how powerful and amazing and glorious this God is who would rescue us in such a way.

[36 : 23] Because if we don't let that lead us to worship, our lives, our hearts are programmed for worship. There's a famous theologian named John Calvin and he said, our hearts are idol factories. Our hearts desire so badly to worship something that if there's nothing in there to worship, they will create new gods out of stuff that is not God so that we can worship something.

Our hearts are idol factories. If we don't let the gospel lead us to worship in God, we will turn from God and worship something else that will drive us away from God.

So we need to remember the gospel. We need to let the gospel lead us to worship. And we need to pass on the gospel to the next generation. Please never, ever assume that the kids understand it.

Or that your friends understand it. Be explicit when we talk about it. Clarify over and over and over again because repetition is the key to learning, especially for little kids.

But they need to hear it again and again and again. And if we are not intentional about passing on this message to the next generation, there's so many other things in the world today that are dragging them and pulling them in other directions that they will be like this third generation in the story today.

[37 : 55] And so I know not all of us have children. That doesn't exclude us from the need to be involved in the lives of the next generation.

If you're a parent, you have an incredible, special privilege to impact your kids' lives in a way that no one else gets to. You get to live with your kids day in and day out. You get to teach them in ways that no one else can teach them.

You get to model for them things that no one else gets to model for them. There's a pastor in the States. He says, as a parent, your greatest job is to prepare your kids for the day of judgment.

How are we doing with that?

I know in my life, probably the greatest influence on my faith, the thing that made the biggest impact on me being where I am today in my relationship with God is having parents who loved God, who modeled lives transformed by the gospel to me, and who encouraged me to trust in him.

[39 : 13] And it's my hope that someday every parent in here could have kids who say the same thing about us. That the reason that they are walking with God is because they have parents who modeled to them what it looks like to walk with God and who encouraged them to pursue that in their own lives.

And if we're not parents, we have a unique opportunity to connect with the kids in the church and the teens in the church.

Did you know that one of the greatest predictors of whether kids will stay in church after they graduate from high school is whether or not they have relationships with the adults in the church? One of the greatest indicators of whether kids will stay in church after they graduate from high school is whether or not they have relationships with the adults in the church.

You taking the time to build a relationship with one of the kids or one of the teens or one of the university students can literally make the difference in whether they stay in church or not after they graduate.

And with every kid, every teen, there comes a time in their life where they don't want to listen to mom and dad. And they need to talk to other people about their problems in life.

[40 : 28] And you having a relationship with them in that time can be the difference between them seeking godly counsel and them turning to the world for advice in that hour of need for counsel.

A few weeks ago, Tobin asked, if every person used their singleness in the church in the way that all of the singles use it, how healthy would the church be? I guess the question today is, if every non-parent used their freedom from having kids in the way that you use it, if you're not a parent, how healthy would the church be?

Parents, how intentional are you being about connecting your kids with other adults in the church and trying to have them build relationships with them? Non-parents, how intentional are you being about reaching out to other people in the church and building relationships and pointing them towards Christ?

And I know it's not just the kids, it's not just the youth. People my age and even older also need people to come into our lives. Maybe not necessarily older people, but more mature people who can come alongside us and remind us of the gospel.

The goal isn't just to focus on the kids. The goal is to focus outside ourselves on each other and point one another towards Christ and build one another up so that we as a church don't forget.

[41 : 49] So that 20 years down the road, Watermark's not a church that's totally forgotten the gospel. And so in recap, God made the world good.

Israel turned against him. We've turned against him. God is just. He can't let our sin go on forever. But God is also a God who saves.

God is a God who rescues. God is a God who saves us. How are we going to respond to that? Are we going to take that for granted? Not let it awe us?

Not let it inspire us to have lives of worship? Or are we going to have our lives radically transformed by this gospel, by this good news of what God has done for us?

Are we going to pass it on to the next generation so that they too can remember how great and amazing this God is? At the end of the day, there's really only two ways to live.

[42 : 52] Our way, following our desires, which leads to death. Or God's way, submitted to his rule, trusting in him, and living obediently to him.

Which way are we going to live? Let's pray. God, we thank you for your love. We thank you for your grace and your salvation. And how even when we had rebelled, you saved us at great cost to yourself.

God, we pray that each of us would respond properly to that amazing good news. That each of us would have lives of worship that reflect how amazing you are to the world around us.

That we'd be intentional about spreading this message to the next generation. That we'd be intentional about living out the truths of this message in our own lives. That we wouldn't be complacent or confused.

That we would be committed to you. God, we thank you. We love you. In Jesus' name, amen.