

- When I was 10 years old I had a 74 year old birthday party. Let me explain
- My granddad, John Gregory Jr., or as he was called by the grandkids “Big John” is the family member in my life that is equal parts man and legend. Do y’all have a relative like that?
 - In my little 10 year old mind- He was Danny- John travoltas character- from Grease- you know- cool cars, leather jacket, and cigarettes rolled up in the sleeve.
 - But I also know for a fact that one time in high school he tried to parachute out of a Pine Tree so the lines of fact and fiction are very blurry.
- Before I was even born, Big John was diagnosed with prostate cancer and went through a battle with it for a time where he came out the victor. But, a few years later it came back and by the time I was 10 years old, the writing was kind of on the wall for ol’ Big John.
- Eventually, he was in a hospice bed at his home in Statesboro Georgia, about a 7 hour drive from me and my family. We were making a trip in May, with a subtle thought that it might be the last time we get to see him.
- His birthday was in June, but I was set on us throwing a birthday party for Big John while we were down there. He loved Nascar so we got banners, made him a Nascar cake, and I didn’t really care that it was about a 6 week early party, I simply wanted to do something nice for him.

- *Big John’s Bday Picture*

- My grandma managed to find a picture of the party and you can see Big John, a shade of the way I remember him there.

- We threw the party for him. Had our cake. Made a memory.
 - Big John died a couple weeks later on May 26, 2011. He didn't quite make it to his 74th birthday, but we at least made sure he had a 74th birthday party.
 - I'm so grateful I didn't wait to throw that party.
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- You know - we often overlook the power of simple acts of goodness that kids can initiate.
 - Big John's birthday didn't change the world. It's not solving world hunger, helping poverty, or bringing world peace by any means.
 - But it's a seed.
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- I was talking to my grandma last week and I asked her "Did that really do anything for him?" and she said "Oh it made him so happy. It brought him a lot of peace". And that's enough for me to look back on it and say "that was good"
 - I can't give you some deep reasoning or say that 10 year old me was trying to share the gospel somehow with him.
 - But I wanted to do something good and, importantly, I had the people around me to help make it happen.
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- City Church, there is a vibrant next generation here in our church.
 - There's no shortage of babies being had in City Kids. Y'all have been busy on that front

- There's 10 year olds in the District 45 house (where our 4th and 5th graders meet every sunday) who have all the energy in the world, and also desire to do a million versions of Birthdays for Big John in their own lives.
- And there are our teenagers in our Metro youth group who are actively seeking out ways to serve the community and their peers.
- We had a service event with Daniel McKee Alternative School not too long ago, and one of our students under their own initiative went to Dustin asking "I want to lead my school club to do this, how do I make that happen?"
- Year after year our City Kids practice generosity by donating money and goods during the holidays and at VBS to local organizations
- All semester at Metro, we've been practicing our Pray, Proclaim, Provide initiative, where our students have chosen over 50 people in their lives that they're committed to Praying for, Proclaiming the Gospel to, and Providing for in acts of service.
- The spirit is actively moving in and through our next generation and it's a beautiful thing to witness
- I'm so thankful our next generation has a church family to nourish, support, and lead these students into those amazing things they are capable of, because there's a million little traps and pitfalls in this world that can quench that drive and motivation they have.
- I want more of it...and I believe God is calling people today to step in those roles

**- Birthday for Big John: The Immeasurable Power of an
Intergenerational Church**

- So today, we're going to read a passage in 2 Timothy that paints a picture for us of what it looks like when a child or young person is raised up in the faith.
- Not only by believing parents but also having other adults mentor them and pour into their lives. When churches have this overflow and teamwork between the generations that are in the church, it's what we call "Intergenerational"
- With a little intentionality and a lot of Jesus, God will do amazing and unexpected things through the lives of the next generation of City Church. And let me tell ya- if you participate in that mission with me- He'll do amazing, unexpected things in you.
- If you need a Bible, they're at the back, those are yours to keep or you can see the words on the screen behind me

- 2 Timothy 1:1-12

**- Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, for the sake of the
promise of life in Christ Jesus:**

To Timothy, my dearly loved son.

**Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our
Lord.**

**I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience as my ancestors
did, when I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day.**

Remembering your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with

joy. I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also.

Therefore, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.

So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher, and that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day.

- This is widely accepted to be the last written letter by The Apostle Paul that we have. At this time Paul is an old man and he is imprisoned for his proclaiming of the Gospel of Jesus.

- But as you can see here, Paul's not too bothered by it. His words drip with hope and power. Paul is writing to Timothy not saying "hey bro, I made some mistakes, don't be like me". He's actually writing with the tone of "Dude, you should do exactly what I did". Because Paul is well aware that the risks he took to get the gospel out there is what landed him in jail, but he also knows the risks he took and the results of them are how he knows he's had a life worth living.
- You know - It was a little scary for me at 10 to suggest throwing Big John a birthday party. What if my parents thought it was a dumb idea or my brothers laughed at me? But I knew Big John was worth it. So I went for it.

1. A Spirit of Fear whispers "Don't Risk It!"

The Spirit of God says "Put it on the line for love!"

- When we talk about risk, we tend to swing wildly between trying to avoid risk at all costs and to living in ways that are overly risky and reckless.
- I'm 25, I'm young and cool and all that stuff, but when I hear the stories of some of you parents out there and the stuff y'all got up to in your adolescence, it truly feels like living in two different worlds.
 - Like hearing about the upbringing my parents had versus mine is mind-boggling. My parents were in high school in the 70s and they're like "Yeah, there was a designated smoking area FOR STUDENTS"
- They were riding in truck beds, no one had ever heard of a bicycle helmet and seat belts only went across your lap and were basically made with twine. Kids went

outside at 8 am and didn't come home til the street lights were on. And parents had NO IDEA where they were. I'm sure it was fun but we also can recognize that there was a lot of bad that came from that. Teenage pregnancies, smoking, drinking, and tragic causes of death are all way down from previous generations, and that is something we should be happy about. We've safeguarded against a lot of unnecessary risk.

- However, the pendulum has swung and just because kids are staying alive does not mean they are really living.
 - The average age of getting your license has almost reached 18. What used to be a symbol of freedom and independence has become something kids either avoid because they're too anxious to learn how to drive, or they can "reach" all their friends through online sources so they don't see the need to drive.
 - Only 46% percent of 12th graders have ever gone on a date. In the 80's it was nearly 90%. Boys in particular just simply aren't asking girls out, because why risk being rejected and embarrassed when you can turn to porn or an AI bot for a "romantic" relationship.
 - Even the hard work that it takes to get an education has abandoned irsk and become a game to see how you can get the highest grade with the least resistance. Why do the homework when you can find the answer or why try to speak up in class cause "what if I'm wrong and everyone sees that I'm wrong"

- If we want to see how we are forming the next generation, we have to see how we're forming ourselves. Because kids are learners, and they learn the good and the bad from the adults around them.

- To live the good life that Trevor's been preaching about requires risk.
 - Spiritual Connection: To come before a holy God as a sinner is risky. You're gonna get exposed and all the deep dark stuff that you know is inside you is gonna be brought to the light. But that is GOOD
 - Deep Relationships: There is no deep relationship without being really seen & known by someone else and that's risky. We're scared to be seen and not loved but without letting ourselves be seen we'll never be really loved. Being known is risky, but that is GOOD
 - Transcendent Purpose: If you want to live a life that is about something bigger than yourself, you'll have to do risky things. No one ever changed the world without taking a risk and it's risky to follow God's commands like "Share the gospel" "Turn the other cheek" and "Give up what you have so you can care for the poor and needy". All of those things are risk, but they are GOOD

- When Paul says **For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.** He is reminding Timothy and us that in order to live faithful lives, we can not be ruled by fear. But we have a resource that nothing else in this world comes close to.

- An infinite well to draw from that empowers us and our students to do good, hard, risky things. And not only that, but to do them lovingly, not by selfish gain. And even more than that, when we find ourselves in the pendulum swing of “well, how should we take risks? Should I let my kids run off unsupervised 24/7 or should I bubble wrap them and keep them inside?” You have the sound judgement and wisdom to know how to go down these roads without falling into the ditch on either side.
- But again, kids have to see the example. If you live in fear and risk-aversion, so will they. If you would like them to be on screens less but you do nothing to change your own screen habits, nothing will change.
 - It’s tough for your teenager to accept that you’ve banned social media because you’re afraid they’ll become addicted - when they see you doomscrolling everytime they walk into a room with you
- That’s where we come in

2. What our Kids See, Our Kids Do.

So Adults need to take risks too.

- From our passage today, we see the Apostle Paul writing to one of his proteges, his disciple Timothy. Paul, on one of his missionary journeys met a young Timothy and took him under his wing, Take a look in Acts
- **Paul went on to Derbe and Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a believing Jewish woman, but his father was a**

Greek. The brothers and sisters at Lystra and Iconium spoke highly of him.

- And then in the letter of 2 Timothy, Paul gives a little more background on Timothy's upbringing

- ⁵I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also.

- This family tree, being formed from Ol Grandma Lois, down to Mama Eunice, an assumedly pagan Greek father, and finally, the promising young Timothy.
- Simply put, there is no more important spiritual influence on a child's life than the parents. I won't throw stats at you but no Church, no private religious school, no youth group, and no other person has as much influence on a child's beliefs as their parents.
- I know, that might feel like a lot of pressure, but remember the spirit that you get to draw from. If the Holy Spirit is powerful enough to raise Christ from the dead, He is also powerful enough to guide you as you raise your kids.
- You can do it. Again, it's risky, however you act is going to have an impact on your kids. You can choose to see it as an opportunity to live and raise your kids in power, love, and sound judgement, or you can be in the spirit of fear and not live into the blessing of getting to be your child's spiritual leader.
- Listen, you're not gonna mess up God's will for your child's life. Timothy had an unbelieving Dad, that didn't doom him. Remember that you are not powerful enough to prevent the Spirit's work in your child's heart. God doesn't need us

humans to do His work but He lets partake, and that's a beautiful thing because it gives us that transcendent purpose that we've been talking about.

- Also, don't think you need to be an expert to lead your child spiritually. I think of it this way:
 - Did you teach your child how to brush your teeth? Yes. Are you a dentist? No.
 - Or maybe you are a dentist so did you teach your child how to ride a bike? Yes. Are you a Tour de France winner? No.
 - If you are hearing this and are a Tour de France winning dentist, I don't know, come up with an analogy for yourself that works.
- But you don't have to be a bible expert or the best prayer or a missionary or any other qualification to show your child what faith in God looks like. They just need to see you do hard and risky things regularly and faithfully. Spiritual disciplines, confession, repentance, sharing the gospel, seeking reconciliation in broken relationships, loving even the neighbors you hate. All of that is risky but again, it is good and your kids need to see that.
- Why do you think I wanted to love my grandad through an act of service so badly? I didn't get that from nowhere, I got it from seeing my parents, my brothers, and my grandmother loving and serving a dying man. And I wanted to be a part of that.
- You are not powerful enough to ruin your child's salvation, you're also not powerful enough to save them yourself. That doesn't make what you do useless, it just frees you up to live faithfully and they get to tag-along.

- But, to the rest of the church. The college students, the young adults and couples without kids, the empty nesters. Can we join these parents in this mission?
- Can we all just be in agreement that parenting is hard and we could do some amazing acts of service by showing parents that there are others who care about their kids and are willing to support them?
- That's not only a service to the parents, but God works wonders through adults who are willing to show up in students' lives.
 - In a survey of students who grew up in church, only a quarter of kids who walked away from the faith said they had close personal friends who were adults from church when they were growing up
 - But of those who stuck by the faith, over $\frac{3}{4}$ of those say they had close adult friends from their church.
- Correlation, causation, whatever you want to call it, I know that God's primary way of doing His will is through people serving and loving others, so it seems like that's His go to plan for youth as well.
- And here's the little secret about this, being a part of a kid's life is mostly just showing up and caring.
 - There is absolutely nothing special about me I can promise you that. I'm an average speaker, with an average personality, and sometimes I stumble my way into doing nice things.
 - But I show up week after week to be faithful to these kids I love and have promised to them my leadership. Most of the time I'm saying the exact same stuff a student's parent has already said to them a billion times, but they just might listen to me cause I'm not their parent.

- Parents, I'm sorry that's how it is, but I thank you for your service.
- The volunteers who lead these students every Wednesday, yes they're having hard conversations and answering questions about the Bible but mostly, they're here for the students every week and trying to be faithful.
- The same goes for D45 and City Kids. Trevor talked about it last week, yes everybody is busy, yes everybody is tired, but we get to stoke the flames of faith in these kids' hearts and we need to make the most of the opportunity.
- I can guarantee you that Paul was a busy man. But he took Timothy under his wing and basically said "watch what I do and then you try"
- Later in this letter, Paul says
- **What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**
- Spiritually leading a child or student ain't easy but it's pretty simple. They look at you and ask or think "How do you live faithfully?" And you basically say "I don't know, I just try" and you let the Holy Spirit fill in the rest. Like their parents, you do the regular, risky, good-life producing stuff that they can copy.
- In youth ministry there's an "industry standard" so to speak on what the ideal small group ratio is 5 kids to every 1 adult. But part of our vision at City Church is to inverse that and have 5 adults (other than parents) pouring into the life of every 1 student.
- So I ask you City Church, are you willing to be one of those 5?

- We've got the structure in place to fill most of those spots
 - The youth minister (me), their small group leader (which we can always use more of), their Host Families (which we can always take more of), but then that leaves the 5th spot open.
 - You can be like Riley Brown, who in no relation to me or the youth ministry, saw me in Chick-fil-A and said "I'm gonna do a middle school girls Bible Study" and it was a massive success. That's what I wanna see!
 - Or you can serve in Metro, D45, City Kids. There's no shortage of options for how you can be a part of this mission, it's only a question of if you're going to do it.
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- City Church, can you imagine what we could see our students do if we have parents who say "I will live into the blessing of being my child's spiritual leader" and adults saying "I will faithfully serve the families of this church by caring for kids" and they come together instead of trying to each outsource the responsibility to the other
 - Let's not play hot potato of "It's the parents job!" or "The church should disciple my child"
 - Let's come together and care for one another. It's a lot easier to take a risk for good things when you know you've got the support system behind you.
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- You know, these fears we're all facing and have to carry one another through, all our fears lead back to the fear of death. Death is the curse of our sin against God.

- Think about it. When I'm afraid of being vulnerable in a relationship - I'm afraid I'll be rejected and the relationships will end. I'm afraid the relationship will die.
- When you don't speak up for the person being degraded during water cooler talk or in the board room at work...we don't risk it because we're afraid of losing the job or a potential promotion. We're afraid opportunity will die.
- But what if you could know - that everything you thought you might lose because you risked for the sake of good - what if you could be guaranteed that all those losses, all those deaths, were only temporary?
- Wouldn't that change the way you look at risk? Well then do I have some Good News for you!

3. Death can't defeat you when you know death has been defeated.

- When you look at Paul's writing, you see a man who is not scared of any situation that life could throw at him, not even death itself. And he's saying to Timothy "don't be scared homie".
- Paul's resilience is not based on a self-built foundation, it's based on the resurrection of Christ which defeats death. So Paul sits in this jail cell at the end of his life and has no fear or trepidation about what he's done and if it means something.
- **So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God.** (Don't worry about me, actually you should kinda hope to join me)

- **He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.** (I get to live out a holy calling, a transcendent purpose, and it's not my expertise or effort that matters, but God's purpose and grace. I am in prison but I am free!)
- **This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.** (Christ has defeated death, what do I or you have to be afraid of?)
- **For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher, and that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day.**
- For the sake of the Gospel Paul was run out of multiple cities, arrested, beaten, shipwrecked, snake-bitten, and nearly stoned to death. He took a lot of risks in to his social status, his relationships, his public image, and his health and at the end of it all he says to Timothy: "Worth it"
- Because Paul's goal in life was not avoiding risk and gaining self-preservation, he didn't even try to numb himself and ignore death, he knew it was coming for him. But instead he focused on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and realized not even death could stop him.

- Isn't that the kind of life you want to live? To live fearlessly and take risks for the good of those around you. To get knocked around in life but get back up knowing that there's something bigger going on here that you get to be a part of. And along the way, you get to find a few Timothy's or have your own Timothy's that you impart the same courage and hope on to.
 - Your legacy does not have to be based on accomplishments that people will forget or an inheritance that people will spend, but your legacy can be the way you pointed to an unforgettable hope that never fades.
 - As Paul dies, he reminds Timothy of the promise of life that is in Jesus Christ. You can do the same.
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- Before Jesus was arrested, beaten, crucified and resurrected, he gathered with his disciples and said this bread is my body and this cup is my blood, take this and remember.
 - When life gets hard and life gets scary, it's easy to forget. I mean the disciples forgot basically everything Jesus said between the time of his death and resurrection. They gave up, Peter immediately went back to the safe life he knew of being fishermen. Two of the disciples were walking to Emmaus just kicking rocks saying "dang, guess its over now"
 - But when they realized and encountered the risen Christ, everything changed. The disciples had no risk-aversion in them because they knew death wasn't even a threat now. And many of them died because of it! And you know what they said? "Worth it"

- What gets you through those fears and the hard parts of life is remembering the broken body of Christ that took the punishment you deserved and the spilled blood that cleanses our sins and defeats death.
- So if you have encountered and realized the resurrected Christ in your life, it's time to remember. To take this bread and cup and see what risk he's calling you to take and who to bring along with you as you do it.
- And if you haven't realized the resurrection of Jesus yet, if you're not a believer, we ask that you don't take the bread and cup but observe in one of the groups and ask yourself "Where does my hope lie? Is it in something bigger than myself? Is it powerful enough to defeat death?"
- God has given us a transcendent purpose and he has graciously given us the Gospel to empower us to do it. Let's do it together City Church.