

10 formational Pillars

Big story of the bible, Respond with Compassion, Serving in mission

Over recent weeks we have been looking at 10 formational pillars. Pillars that we believe will help to grow lifelong, active followers of Jesus.

As we have mentioned each week, over recent years there has been a disturbing trend of young Adults leaving the church and their faith. Personally I am not convinced that it is that recent, nor that it is confined to Young adults, we could have a good look at the 'empty nesters' as well.

While there are a myriad of reasons as to why people leave the church and the faith, at the heart of this disturbing statistic and trend is that we have been a bit slow to critically consider 'what does it take to see people grow as long term, active followers of Jesus in response to His final command'.

Matt 28

¹⁹Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The current 'discipling factory' seems to be turning out defective models and it is time we did something about it.

The question that we have been asking over recent weeks has been 'What are some of the 'formational experiences' that, will cause people's faith to go deeper, be more strongly rooted and grounded, and provide a foundation and stability for life's turbulent years?'

This is what we have been looking at over the last few weeks and we will bring it to a conclusion today.

Summarise the pillars we have looked at.

1. Family/household nurture
2. Generational connections
3. Positive peer community
4. Mentors and life coaches
5. Encounters with Jesus
6. Peak experiences

7. Anchors/Rites of passage
8. Big story of the bible
9. Respond with compassion
10. Serving in mission

Big Bible Story

The first pillar I want to cover today is the **big story of the Bible**. First let me test you on a bit of bible trivia.

- How many books in the bible? - 66 OT- 39 / NT- 27
- How many authors? - Over 40
- Over how many years was it written? - About 1500
- How many chapters? - 1189
- How many stories in the bible? - One

Every part of the Bible – each event, book, character, command, prophecy and column – must be understood in the context of one storyline.

In many cases the approach to faith formation has been built around a series of disconnected Bible stories and memory verses. We as 'the church' have not always done a good job of adequately teaching the faith, and sometimes we as individuals can be a bit lazy in understanding our faith. That is why we have written on our wall to remind us that it is important to learn our faith.

Today many are all looking for the "BIG" story of life, what it is all about - Well the Bible provides the story. As we enter this story it is important that we discover not only the content, but also that we are a part of this story.

So what is this one story? What is God's story? Well it can be told in a number of different ways but I found this video that tells us the big God story in 5 mins. Now it is presented for kids, but why should they have all the good stuff

<https://www.gospelproject.com/kids/>

So God's big bible story is all about Jesus, but as the guy said, God's story is not yet complete, the last parts of the bible are all about the followers of Jesus, the renewed people of God, us.

This 'Act in the drama' is where we as OBC, is where you and your family fit into the story? What role will we play? God is inviting us to be a part of his story, of bringing restoration, justice and forgiveness.

Which brings us to the next pillar – compassion – **responding with compassion**

Why is **RESPONDING WITH COMPASSION** so important in the faith formation process? Here again it is all about Jesus.

I don't know about you but as I watch the news each evening I am acutely aware of the brokenness in the world. We live in a complex world, with complex problems and too often we either protect ourselves and our children from the problems rather than presenting them with the issue at hand and inviting their suggestions for what could be done.

So often we purposely protect our kids from the challenges of life, or maybe we just don't consider that they have something to offer. A common scenario is that one of the parents might deliver a meal to a needy family in the community while the other parent stays at home to mind the children. Or both parents are involved in meeting a local need and they hire a babysitter for the children for this time. How much better would it be, in terms of deepening faith, if the children were involved not only in the delivering or the outworking of this compassionate response but also in the planning and preparation of what is to take place. This can deepen their faith.

After Christmas Gay and I had the privilege of being at a missions conference in Thailand and there we hung out with inspirational people. There was a 22 year old there called Lizzie and this is her faith story.

Tell story of Lizzie

Lizzie was only nine years old when God burdened her heart for the women and Children of South Asia. At a small church gathering she listened to Kerry and Annie, two of the founders of Freeset, tell stories about their work with impoverished women in South Asia; women who were being exploited and stripped of their dignity. They shared how Freeset offered these women freedom and hope, by providing them with a livelihood and welcoming them into a community that loved and supported them. Lizzie was hooked.

"I didn't really understand the finer details of what Kerry and Annie were talking about," said Lizzie, "but I remember feeling a huge weight of injustice. I simply couldn't shake the feeling that because we don't choose what life circumstance we are born into, one of these girls could have just as easily been me."

Lizzie began raising money for Freeset. She donated her pocket money, and raised support through her friends and family, to help Freeset rescue more women out of poverty. Her passion and enthusiasm were infectious, and a growing number of people began supporting Freeset thanks to her efforts.

At age 14, Lizzie was able to travel to South Asia and meet the women at Freeset whom she had helped support. The time she spent with these women - working alongside them, visiting them in their homes, and meeting their families – furthered her resolve to serve the poor in South Asia. "I believe that God calls everyone to do something special and that thing for me would be spending my life amongst the poor in South Asia," said Lizzie.

In 2015, Lizzie joined the Freeset team as she continues responding to the burden which God has laid on her heart.

It is time for some fresh thinking, some creative thinking, some risky thinking about how we can empower our children, our young people, ourselves, and give them/us a voice to be agents of change in our broken world.

How do we develop compassion in ourselves and in our family....

1 We sit. We sit with the heart of Jesus.

WE live in a broken world, oh sure little old NZ is pretty fortunate, our end of the planet is pretty nice, maybe not as broken as the rest, but still it is broken. We are surrounded with brokenness just outside our doors, and certainly overseas. But often we don't see it because we don't sit. If we want to develop compassion we need to sit with people, sit with the heart of Jesus.

Sitting means stopping what you might normally do, and going out from the comfort of your homes to the place where there is brokenness, pausing and spending time. Jesus often paused with people and listened to them, he had a

reputation of being a friend of sinners. Sitting with Jesus probably won't be comfortable, it may mean confronting face to face with the edge of society, with all the smells and other senses active. Heart touching heart, life touching life. There is a cost with this, but this is how we can develop compassion as we sit with the heart of Jesus.

Once we sit with someone for a bit we will begin to see with the eyes of Jesus

2 We see with the eyes of Jesus

This may not happen naturally, we may need to pray, I believe the Spirit of God will help us to begin to see with the eyes of Jesus.

'When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

"Lord Jesus as we sit in your broken world, help us to see with your eyes."

How do we see, and how do we help our children to see, the needs? This is where some of the other formational pillar kick in.

- The family - This underlines the importance of a family table routine where these issues can be explored together and prayed through.
- Mentors - the benefit of a mentor to talk and pray with. You cannot be all things to your kids, it take a village to raise a child, connect them with other who have passion or compassion for different things
- We all need to be prepared to take some risks – peak experiences - expose yourselves and your family to the brokenness and allow the Spirit of God to work through us all.
- Create generational connection with people who can be a model to our kids and the world around us that needs us to respond with the compassion of Jesus.

As you sit and see, then it will begin to touch our hearts and minds and we will begin to ask the question "what can we do to respond?" Asking Jesus, what can we do to serve with the hands of Jesus.

3 We serve with the hands of Jesus – Serve on Mission

When any person has to live out of the hope, the belief, which is within them, this causes their faith to grow deeper. This is true for all ages. Where are the

opportunities for you, and your family to be able to live out, give out, as they continue to grow in their journey with Jesus?

When all ages serve in mission, this has benefits on many levels – strengthening the household of faith as well as spiritual life of each member of the family.

Sending teams to overseas mission fields has been a long held strategy of local church communities. However, very few of these include all ages. Imagine the impact on a person's faith having served on a mission team in a developing country. But you do not need to go overseas to be involve in a mission project. There are needs all around us if we have eyes to see and if we are prepared to take a few risks.

Talk to the Staintons

AS you know the Stainton's are preparing to head out to Cambodia, hopefully half way through this year.

I want to bring them up here and hear how that process happened.

- When was your earliest exposure to missions?
- Did the pillar of 'responding with compassion' come into your life, if so when and how?
- AT one stage you as a family, kids and all, visited Cambodia. Why did you do that?
- You have chosen to 'serve with the hands of Jesus' by moving to Cambodia, was this an easy decision, and what has been the scariest part so far?
- What can we be praying for now?

Projects

- Engage with opportunities in your community, work with initiatives that are taking place eg. Volunteer at schools, Clean Up the neighbourhood, Good neighbour trust etc.
- food rescue, Street help, pregnancy choice.
- Rake leaves
- Living on \$2 a day challenge.
- 40 hour famine - Sleeping rough.
- Visit your local Aged Care facility.: give a concert, massage hands, paint nails, etc.

- Food hampers delivered to families in the community by families in the faith community.
- Shoebox, Christmas angel, self denial.

Responding with compassion and serving in mission is all part of God's big story

These 10 formational pillars are not just for youth and children, this is for everyone. And this is not just for churches, this is for families, this is for individuals.

As you glance through these I encourage you to be asking yourself,

- I am responsible for my own spiritual growth and development, so in my life which pillars are strong and which needs work -
- I am responsible for my families spiritual growth and development, so in my family which pillars are strong and which needs work
- I am play a part in my church families spiritual growth and development, so in my church family, which pillars are strong and which need work