

February 25, 2024

Let The Children Come – Part 3 - What This Looks Like for VVCC

I. What this DID look like for VVCC

- In 1967 when VVCC started, the music was traditional hymns, but the children's programs included children's songs—adapting methods to more effectively reach a select audience.
- I became the Pastor at the beginning of **1991**. VVCC was forward thinking then—taking steps to reach the next generation!
- Our first change and challenge THEN was starting and staffing a nursery.
- Staffing our nurseries are **STILL A CHALLENGE TODAY**.

VVCC has gone through 100s of changes. That shouldn't surprise us in our rapidly changing world.

- **VVCC started before** computers, then came the internet, then cell phones, then smartphones, then social media.
- **We CHANGED** from the clip art mock up newsletter to computer generated communications,
- **From mimeograph**, to xerox, to printers,
- **From overhead projectors** and transparencies to computer generated projections on screens.
- **From piano organ and choirs, to worship teams and bands.**
- **And what did we learn from all this?**

There are two things that everybody hates. Change and the way things are.

And yet, Change and adaptation is important. The Apostle Paul explained it this way.

1 Corinthians 9:19–23 (NIV) — 19 Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

WHY did Paul adapt his methods with different audiences?

Paul used **one word** seven times in this passage to explain WHY. It's hard to see it in many English translations. The word is "*hina*" in Greek and can be consistently translated "in order that".

- **"In order that"** "I might win more of them" (9:19)
- **"In order that"** he might "win the Jews" (9:20)
- **"In order that"** I might win those under the law (9:20)

- “**In order that**” I might win those outside the law (9:21)
- “**In order that**” I might win the weak. (9:22)
- “**In order that**” by all means I might save some. (9:22)
- I do it all for the sake of the gospel **In order that** I may share with them in its blessings. (9:23)

To function as RESCUED RESCUERS is WHAT FOLLOWERS OF JESUS are all about! Our purpose for life has changed!

2 Corinthians 5:15 (NIV): And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

- TOO many believers, don't think this way.

QUESTION 2 on the “TALK IT OVER” discussion sheet (has some TYPOS) **I should have written it to read this way:**

- How can Paul's adaptability and culturally sensitive approach help any church effectively reach the “next generation” for Christ? What hindrances might Paul spot in today's American churches where youth who used to come stopped coming altogether once they were old enough to choose for themselves?

What do you have to understand to answer this question:

- 1) The unchanging message of the Gospel.
- 2) God's unchanging Holiness and his moral standards, and
- 3) As to METHODOLOGY: God moved from an OUTSIDE IN methodology to an INSIDE OUT methodology when he moved from the temporary Old Covenant into the Fulfilled NEW Covenant!

After Paul met Jesus, he discovered how many Jewish “traditions” were actually human interpretations and hindrances, added like “hedges” that obscured the core.

God's love and mercy were being replaced by “OUTSIDE in” legalism as if earning God's grace or mercy. That has always been wrong (even during the Old Covenant).

God made a way for us to become GOOD inside and out!

Luke 18:16 (NIV) But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

There are many kinds of things that hinder “children” and the “next generation” from coming to Jesus.

After Paul met Jesus, he discovered how **many Jewish “traditions”** were actually human **interpretations and hindrances**. Their “traditions” served as “hedges” outside the law. Keeping these “hedges” became hindrances rather than helpful. God's love and mercy were being replaced by “OUTSIDE in” legalism, and pride.

What we have been given by Jesus is not “OUTSIDE IN” but “INSIDE OUT.” We received the “implanted Word” (logos), (James 1:21); the “word of life” (1 John 1:1-2) “the word made manifest, which they had seen” .

The New Covenant is INSIDE out! New life filling a new heart!

Paul showed REMARKABLE ADAPTABILITY

Paul did not change his MORALS or his MESSAGE, but he radically changed his METHODS to reach people who were far from God.

Many church-going people don't know the Bible well enough to discern the difference between the good news Jesus brought and man made “hedged” of traditions that are huge hindrances to people. Jesus, then Paul, addressed these interpretive hindrances extensively!

Do we have a readiness like Paul's to change methods without compromising the unchanging gospel message?

- I. What this **DID** look like for VVCC
- II. What this **DOES** look like **NOW**

Would you say VVCC has welcoming, enthusiastic, authentic, energetic, and relevant worship experiences?

I hope you think so. BUT even if you do, that doesn't mean we get stuck and never try to make it better.

We will always need MORE ADAPTING and more FLEXIBILITY and more Changes to be effective in an ever changing world.

Think about how fast things have changed since the internet, the information age, mobile smart phones, and social media. Changes ahead may come even faster.

Why must we change?

Paul's answer was “...so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22”

We have to continue to work diligently to help people understand and perceive the same unchanging gospel message as relevant and desirable today, and everyday.

- I. What this **DID** look like for VVCC
- II. What this **DOES** look like **NOW**
- III. What we pray it **WILL** look like **SOON**

How can we more effectively reach children and their families? What are the types of changes required for a church to be more effective in reaching the "next generation"?

In August, I shared a vision for our future, some of the ideas I shared then are already being reconfigured. This has happened with us before many times.

Remember our Broadway Plans of 2007?

We communicated vision, drew up plans, but God's answer was different than we expected! He gave us something 3 times as large for a **THIRD** of the cost!

CONSULTANTS: What I shared in August was after working with Consultants for 3 months:

THREE STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

1. **OUTREACH TASK FORCE TEAM:** "To vigorously and strategically pursue and reach people far from God in our unique mission field."
2. **DISCIPLESHIP TASK FORCE TEAM:** "To help people take steps on a clear, simple, Jesus-following pathway."
3. **FACILITIES TASK FORCE TEAM:** "To fully utilize current and future facilities as a tool that enables initiatives 1 & 2 to happen with increasing effectiveness."

We have not changed our 3 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, but we have come to some RECONFIGURED CONCLUSIONS.

A Masterplan reconfiguration has begun...and so far it looks something like this:

1. **STUDENT MINISTRY** moves into this space here [orange area].
2. **FAMILY NIGHT: A consolidated night for the whole family:**
Classes for Parents like **Parenting Classes, Marriage Classes, and Financial Peace University.** We believe this will have tremendous REACH potential.
3. **ADD 2 more CLASSROOMS**
4. **ADD HVAC** (Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) **added to**
 - **MULTI-ROOM,**
 - **Student spaces**
 - **New Classrooms**
5. **ADD SOLAR**
6. **MANZANITA EXPANDS into (student) vacated space**

2 Timothy 1:5 (NIV) — 5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

We are a fully intergenerational church! Watch what happens when we plant seeds in a child!

A watermelon seed is able to reproduce itself two hundred thousand times. That tiny seed draws power from the earth to become a great, green watermelon. In the same sense, God can use a single life—John's or yours, or mine—to reproduce blessings for countless others.

Let the Children Come

Part 3

“What This Looks Like For VVCC”

SMALL TALK

1. Think about a time when you felt understood and valued by someone from a different generation. What made that experience meaningful to you?

VIEWPOINT

2. **Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.** How can Paul's culturally sensitive approach and his adaptability help a church effectively reach the “next generation” for Christ? What hindrances might he spot in today's churches where youth once came but never returned to once they are old enough to choose for themselves?
3. In what ways can we adapt our methods of communication and outreach to effectively engage with the next generation without compromising the core message of the Gospel?
4. What are some ways a 60 year old might step out of his or her comfort zone to “become all things to all people” with a 16 year old (and visa versa)? Where can such diverse age groups and backgrounds find level ground?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. In what practical ways can we create opportunities for intergenerational mentorship and relationship-building within our church family, fostering mutual understanding and support?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

6. Pray with your group for the Children's Ministry. Use the brochure as a reference to inform your prayers.