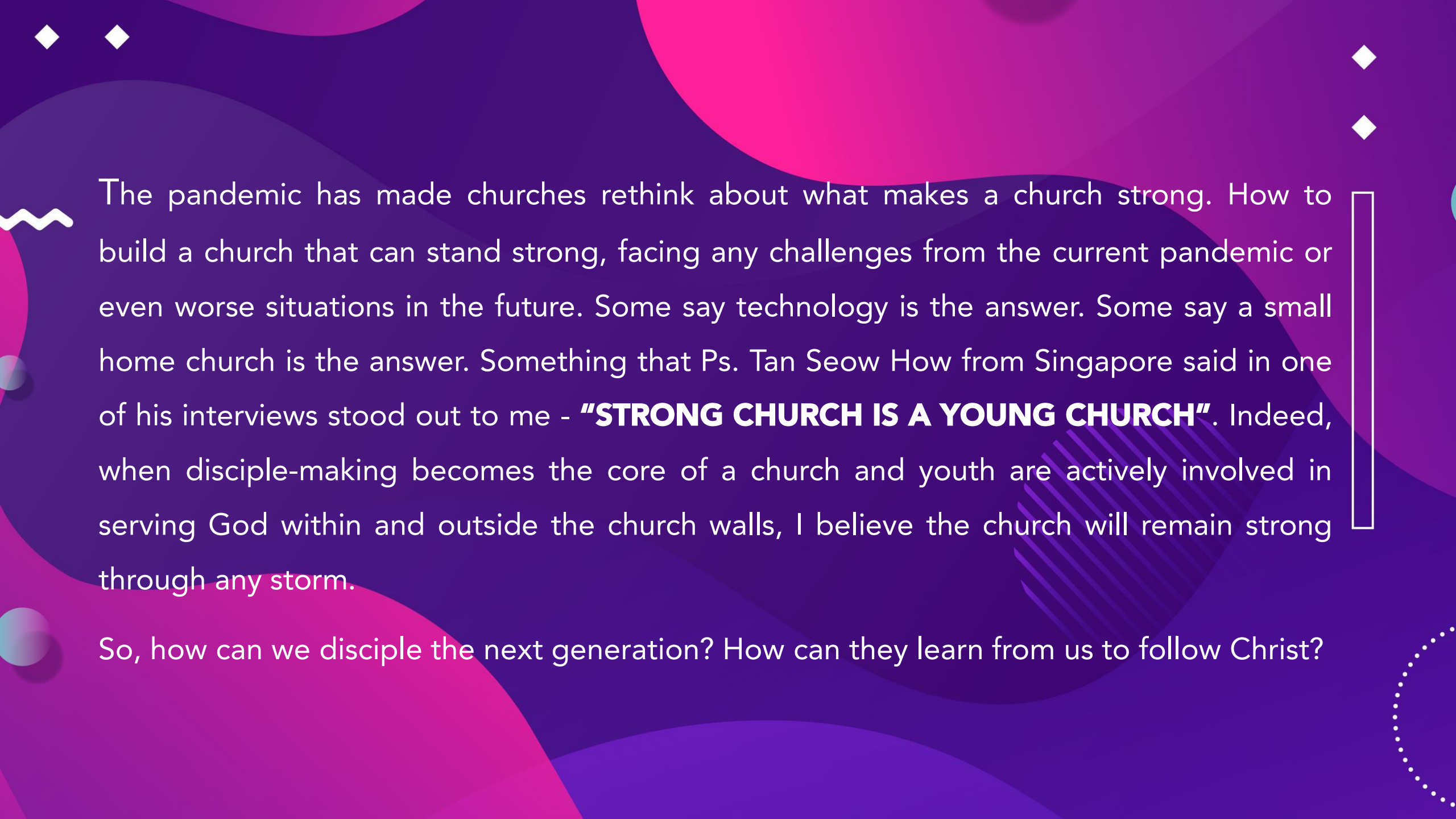




DISCIPLESHIP FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION




The pandemic has made churches rethink about what makes a church strong. How to build a church that can stand strong, facing any challenges from the current pandemic or even worse situations in the future. Some say technology is the answer. Some say a small home church is the answer. Something that Ps. Tan Seow How from Singapore said in one of his interviews stood out to me - **“STRONG CHURCH IS A YOUNG CHURCH”**. Indeed, when disciple-making becomes the core of a church and youth are actively involved in serving God within and outside the church walls, I believe the church will remain strong through any storm.

So, how can we disciple the next generation? How can they learn from us to follow Christ?

Everyone is unique and therefore we are learning in different ways. Scientists say there are various learning styles, like auditory, visual, kinesthetics, etc. But interestingly enough, there is one universal learning style that is proven to be very effective and that is **IMITATING**. Especially during the golden age, for ages 0-5 years, everyone uses this learning method to absorb knowledge, skills, and habits.

“And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.” (1 Cor 11:1 NLT) Paul’s statement in this verse is bold. Many people say, “Don’t imitate me. I’m not perfect. But you can surely imitate Christ.” Yet, Paul knows that the only way for people to truly follow God is through discipleship, so one must become a role model. I believe this is the deepest expression of disciple-making. If we want to disciple the next generation, then we must bravely say **“Follow me, as I follow Christ.”**



Let me share my experience as a disciple who disciple others. I have several mentors in my life who are older than me (they're from Baby Boomers and I'm from Gen-Y). Imitating my mentors, I also disciple someone younger than me, a 17-year-old teenager named Michael. Through my own journey, I learned three things that I consider to be the main elements of intergenerational discipleship:

RELATE, INSPIRE, and TRUST

RELATE

Being a mentor doesn't happen overnight. We can't say to someone we just know "From today, I will be your mentor." It doesn't work like that. Mentoring is built upon genuine relationship & caring over time. Whenever I come to my mentor and ask if he has some time for me, he will stop whatever he's doing at that moment and spend his time for me. This kind of small gesture inspires me to also invest time in Michael's life. Whenever he needs me, I would stop my work and spend time with him, even if that means I have to stay till midnight!

Other than investing time, building relationship with the next generation requires humility. We need to see the relationship as mentor & mentor (as fellow disciples), instead of mentor & mentee. One of my mentors said to me that she considers me a good friend of hers, even though she's my mom's age. Having a mentor-mentor relationship also means that I have to listen to Michael's inputs, advice, and reminders because he's also my mentor.

INSPIRE

We are to inspire not just with words, but more importantly with our lives. 1 Timothy 4:12 (MSG) says, "Teach believers with your life." Again, Paul has taught us another golden lesson for disciple-making. My mentors have shared great quotes and great sermons with me. But that's not the main reason why I follow them. I follow them because what they say is what they live. My mentor always says, "The Word has to become flesh."

In the journey of discipling Michael and his friends, I always encourage them to focus on others, to help and take care of people in need. The first question they ask when they are about to start a project is, "Will you come with us?" A simple verbal answer "yes" would not inspire them unless I take actions. So, yes, I do Bible studies, pray daily, help flood victims, make face masks for medical workers, and teach underprivileged children with these teenagers. What they need is not only words of encouragement, but my actions to share my life with them. I know it may consume a lot of time and energy, yet I can guarantee that the result is more than satisfying!

TRUST

Everybody makes mistakes and I'm one of them. One day I made a mistake and my mentor had to clean up the mess for me. I was ashamed because I felt I became more of a burden and couldn't be of any help. But surprisingly, after that incident, he came to me and said "I'm sorry, it was my mistake that I didn't explain it clearly to you." Moreover, after that day he trusted me with more significant roles and responsibilities, more than I had been entrusted with before the incident. From this, I learned that a leader should trust his follower, more than his follower trusts himself.

When I first met Michael and his friends, they were on the brink of closing their small group. Then, God reminded me about the man who took care of the vineyard, in the story of Unfruitful Vine (Luke 13:6-9). I knew I could not and should not give up on them. Now, every time Michael shares a testimony about his small group, he always says "At that time, she told us that we have lots of potential, that she believes in us. I am just an ordinary boy at school. I'm not smart or famous. But even so, I know that someone truly trusts me."

In my country, Indonesia, 80% of Christian youth gave their lives to Christ before the age of 15. This is amazing news! But, when we asked them “When was the last time you went to church regularly?”, 80% of the same youth said that it was before the age of 15. When I heard about this, I made a commitment to act in any way I can to stop this wave of youth leaving church! In the next 20 years, I don’t want to see the same percentage of youth leaving church.

But I can’t do it alone. An African proverb says, “It takes a village to raise a child.” If we don’t disciple the next generation, the world will disciple them. It’s not just the job of the youth pastors, parents, or Sunday school teachers to disciple them. It’s everyone’s responsibility, including the senior pastors, the full-time workers, the whole congregation and even the janitors to invest time and energy to relate, to inspire and to trust the next generation.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD

The good news is, if we disciple them, they will disciple the world. I can see how the discipleship seed has grown in Michael's heart. He will do everything possible to encourage his friends to get actively involved at church. He calls his friends, holds game nights, initiates fellowship and encourages his friends to serve others. I have just been his mentor for 9 months. But now, without my instruction, he has begun to pray for the young generation every night. What a beautiful seed!

My dream is to see other Michaels give their lives to Christ and disciple the next generation. We must make sure that the discipleship thread, from Baby Boomers to Gen X to Gen Y to Gen Z, from generation to generation to generation, will never be broken. I believe that our God is the God of generations. For us to have a strong church, that is a young church, the next generation has to continue disciple the next generation. And for that to happen, we have to be their role models who can relate, inspire, and trust them.

**IF WE DISCIPLE THEM, THEY WILL
DISCIPLE THE WORLD**

The background features a woman in a pink shirt and blue pants running towards the right on the left side. On the right side, a woman in a purple shirt and blue pants is falling backwards. A large, semi-transparent purple oval is centered in the background, containing the text. The overall color palette is vibrant, with shades of pink, purple, and blue.

Questions for Reflection

In the past 3 months, how have you disciplined the next generation around you?

What commitment(s) are you willing to make, to make sure that the discipleship thread will never be broken from generation to generation?

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