

THE NEXT 50 YEARS – PART II

ABOUT THIS WEEK

This week, your group will continue the discussion on *The Next 50 Years* series by considering what three of the six vision statements for St. Mark means for them and for the church.

ITEMS NEEDED

Bibles 29–Day Prayer Devotional for *The Next 50 Years* Pen and paper

CHECKLIST BEFORE YOUR GROUP ARRIVES

Pray for your group Read through Discussion Guide Refreshments (optional)
 Clean meeting area Clean bathroom Crack front door

OPENING (10-12 MIN)

Briefly welcome everyone and say: Last time we met we talked about some of the Biblical principles behind giving as a part of our series *The Next 50 Years*. Today we're going to continue our discussion by considering what St. Mark will look like in half a century if we live out the six vision statements. But first, for today's icebreaker—

I'LL NAME AN ITEM'S COST 50 YEARS AGO (IN 1974), YOU GUESS IF IT WAS HIGHER OR LOWER.

**WAS THE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME HIGHER OR LOWER THAN \$10,000?
(HIGHER, \$11K)**

**WAS THE AVERAGE PRICE OF A ½ GALLON OF MILK HIGHER OR LOWER THAN \$1.00?
(LOWER, \$.78)**

**WAS THE AVERAGE PRICE OF A NEW CAR HIGHER OR LOWER THAN \$5,000?
(LOWER, \$4,441)**

After the icebreaker, say: A lot can change in 50 years! Especially if St. Mark lives out the six vision statements God has placed on our heart. Today we'll look at three of those vision statements and consider what they mean for us as individuals and as a church as we look ahead to *The Next 50 Years*.

OPENING PRAYER (1 MIN)

After a discussion, say: But before we get into today's discussion, let's pray.

Host, lead the group in prayer.

A CHURCH GROWING IN PRAYER (5 MIN)

After the prayer, say: The first vision statement we're looking at is to "be a church growing in prayer".

CAN SOMEONE READ LUKE 11:1 ALOUD FOR US?

IF YOU'RE COMFORTABLE SHARING, WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO TAKE ONE STEP FORWARD IN YOUR PRAYER LIFE?

WHAT WOULD ST. MARK LOOK LIKE IF EVERYONE TOOK A STEP FORWARD IN PRAYER THIS YEAR?

A CHURCH THE NEXT GENERATION CALLS THEIR OWN (5 MIN)

After a discussion, say: Our next vision statement is to “be a church the next generation calls its own”.

CAN SOMEONE READ PSALM 78:4 ALOUD FOR US?

LET'S SPLIT THIS INTO TWO QUESTIONS. FIRST, LET'S DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES OF A CHURCH WHERE KIDS AND YOUTH AREN'T INVOLVED.

NOW LET'S FLIP IT—WHAT WOULD ST. MARK LOOK LIKE IF THE NEXT GENERATION WERE MORE INVOLVED IN THE OPERATION OF THE CHURCH?

A CHURCH KNOWN FOR EXCEPTIONAL GENEROSITY (5 MIN)

After a discussion, say: Finally, our third vision statement for tonight is to “be a church known for exceptional generosity.”

In 2 Corinthians 9:13-14 the Apostle Paul writes a thank you letter to a church after they gave a very generous offering to a church in need. He tells them,

¹³ Because of the gift by which you have proved your faith, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. ¹⁴ And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.

Exceptional generosity elicits a response in people. It's unexpected. It's lavish.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST FINANCIAL NEEDS IN THE BATTLE CREEK AREA?

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE FOR ST. MARK TO BE KNOWN AS “EXCEPTIONALLY GENEROUS” BY PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY WHO DON'T GO TO OUR CHURCH?

CLOSING (3-5 MIN)

AS A CLOSING QUESTION, WHICH OF THESE THREE VISION STATEMENTS IS MOST-EXCITING TO YOU AND WHY?

After a discussion, say: There are a lot of steps to take if we're going to fulfill these vision statements, both for ourselves personally and for our church. But all we can focus on today is our next steps.

Our first next step for *The Next 50 Years* is to keep praying the daily prayers for our campaign using the *29-Day Prayer Devotional*. And to start our closing prayer tonight, I'll read today's entry.

The second step is to come to the **Early Commitment Dinner on September 26th**. You can RSVP at www.stmark.net/rsvp

And then the third step is to make your pledge on **Commitment Sunday on October 6th**.

CLOSING PRAYER (5 – 7 MIN)

DOES ANYONE HAVE ANY OTHER PRAYER REQUESTS?

Host, write down your group's prayer requests.

Next, close out the group in prayer by praying the date's prayer in "The Next 50 Years 29-Day Prayer Devotional".

Then, close your group by praying for your group's other prayer requests.