

Summer Celebration Weekend

Dan Hamel
July 27, 2025

Note: Please view the online sermon to see videos from the various summer experiences in which The Creek's children and students participated and to see the full conversations between Dan and various guests.

Dan and Hudson

What a joy to be with you today! As Parker mentioned before worship, this is a special morning for us at The Creek, because in addition to casting the spotlight onto Jesus, and praising him for who he is and all he's done, we want to also shine the spotlight on the next generation here at The Creek, and thank God for the ways he is working in the lives of our students. That's why I get to have my oldest son with me today.

Because Hudson is going into the first grade, this summer, for the first time, he got to participate in our summer camp experience and come with us to Camp Allendale. Hudson, when you think back to your time at camp, what were some of your favorite memories?

Hudson—fishing, turtles, swimming.

What about the Bible time? What did we learn about from God's word?

Nicodemus came and asked how people can enter the kingdom of heaven. He said you have to be born again.

What verse did you talk about?

"God so loved the world..."

Hudson, will you pray for us?

Dan and Kennedy

Kennedy helps to lead our children's ministry. She has been on staff with us for six years! How did you end up feeling called to this ministry?

What would you want parents to know about what happens down at Creek Kids?

What was the key take away for our kids at camp this year?

Are there any stories from this camp season that you'd want to share with us?

We want to give a huge thank you to all the volunteers who attended camp with our kids.

Dan and Luke

Luke has been a youth pastor for eighteen years, and he's been on staff with us for eleven. Tell us what got you into youth ministry?

So many youth pastors skip around from church to church. The average tenure is two years. By the time they are 30, most youth pastors are either out of ministry or waiting to do something else in ministry. You are 40. What's kept you in student ministry, and what's kept you here for all these years?

You lead our middle school ministry. Tell us what Sunday mornings look like for our students when the parents are in here.

You went to our middle school and high school camp this year. How many students and adults did we take?

Thanks to our adult volunteers, we had one adult for every 3.5 kids. Those are the ratios that schools dream about.

What's something fun that happened at camp this year?

What was the theme?

How did the students respond?

- 74 baptisms
- 140 students signed up to serve
- 33 students expressed interest in vocational ministry
- 100% of returning students in HSM connected to life groups

This is incredible. We are so excited about this!

Dan's Message

We are going to dive into God's Word today to see how Scripture shapes our focus on the next generation. If you have your Bible with you, turn to Deuteronomy 6. This is what most Jewish scholars refer to as the most important, the most central passage in the entire Old Testament. Observant Jews pray these verses every day of their lives! "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children" (Deuteronomy 6:4-7).

Again, this is the most central, foundational passage in the entire Old Testament, and it basically teaches us three things:

1. **There is only one God!** The Lord is one. At this time in history, the Jews were the only people in the world to believe this. God wants us to love him more than anything else.
2. **God wants us to love him completely.** "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." Every night when I put my four-year-old daughter Addie to bed, she always asks me to give her "her secrets." She's all curled up in her bed, snug under her covers, and I lay down with her, and I whisper in her ear: "I love you yesterday, today, and always." "I'll always be your daddy; you'll always be my little girl." After I tell her those secrets, she leans up in my ear and whispers, "I love you more than anyone in the world. But I love God more than you." That's what God wants—he wants to be not just number one in our lives, but the center of our lives.
3. **God wants us to teach our children to love him completely.** "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children."

At The Creek, we want to take this command as seriously and sacredly as we possibly can. We want to take the commands of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the truth of Scripture, and impart them to the next generation.

Two months ago, I had the privilege of officiating a wedding ceremony for this wonderful couple, Logan and Rose. Logan and Rose are here every single week, worshipping together. They are not in the 9:00 service because they are in the four-year-old classroom, where they serve together every week. Logan and Rose were both baptized here at The Creek when they were college students. Rose's mom also decided to get baptized here not even a year ago. There are so many wonderful things I could tell you about them, but what I want to share is the venue where they were married. It was an old church, with a cross and stained-glass windows and all the normal features, but it was decommissioned and was no longer being used as a church. A businessman bought the church and turned it into a permanent wedding venue. Before the ceremony I was walking around with my kids and we were exploring the upstairs, which probably hadn't been touched by anyone in a decade. We entered a dilapidated area with an old sign that said "Prayer Room." Ceiling tiles falling, linoleum flooring peeled up, insulation strewn about. I told my kids, "I know it doesn't look like it, but this is a sacred place. Before you were born, people spent hundreds, probably thousands of hours in this room talking to God." My son asked, "What happened?" I thought about it for a second and said, "Well, son, somewhere along the way they were unable to pass their love of Jesus on to those who were younger. As they got older, there was no one left to come into this room and pray, no one left to come into the sanctuary and worship God. They eventually sold this building to the person willing to pay the most money for it." Hudson said, "That's so sad." Yeah, it really is.

Can we all agree, in the name of all that is sacred, we can never let that become our story! Our children, and the next generation, and the vitality of the church for the coming decades matters way too much for that. Many of you who follow sports know that Scottie Scheffler has been the number one ranked golfer in the world for a while now. He has mastery over the golf ball. He can't stop winning. Every time he speaks at the conferences, he says, "I enjoy golf and work hard at it, but my faith and my family are really all that matters to me in life, not how well I score." Last week he won the British Open, one of the most prestigious tournaments in the world. And as he was accepting the trophy off the 18th green, his little one-year-old son started running up to his daddy, falling along the way. Look at the celebration response Nike put out. What matters most in life? Not trophies and million-dollar checks, not being on top of the sporting world, but our children.

"You've already won, but another major's always nice." In so many ways, you look at what's happening at this church, and you say, "By God's grace, it seems like we've already won." We have more kids and students in our ministry than ever before. We've had nearly as many baptisms in the year 2025 as there have been days. And as you heard moments ago, over 70 students have made the decision this summer to be baptized and give their life to Jesus. We had over 30 students say yes to full time vocational ministry. What more could we ask for? 3 John 4 says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."

We have so much reason for joy these days! "God commanded our ancestors to teach their children his decrees, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children" (Psalm 78:5-6). From one generation to the next, to the next, we want all generations to know God and declare his greatness and his love. We don't just want a strong, vibrant, and flourishing church in the year 2025; we want a strong, vibrant and flourishing church in the year 2030, and 2040, and 2050, and 2080, and 2090, and into the 22nd century. We want "the children yet to be born" to know, love and follow Jesus all the days of their lives. That's why we as a church invest so many resources into our children—there is no more precious commodity in this world. One of the greatest things about investing in children is the compounding nature of the return. When Keren was in her twenties, even though she had a full-time job, she lived very frugally. She trusted God with her money and blessed other people, but

with the extra she had, she decided she should invest it. She invested in a small little company called Apple. It compounded. It grew exponentially. Fifteen years later we bought a house with it. She invested. It compounded. There was a great reward. What's true in the economy is 1000 times truer in the kingdom. When we invest the gospel and the love of Jesus into children, there is an exponential return. I want to share a few examples with you.

About twenty years ago, a student in our ministry named Josh Conley got engaged here, went on a mission trip, and was baptized. That wasn't just an investment that was made twenty years ago. Josh is in finance and healthcare administration and is still active at our church. Not only did he take his own son to Camp Allendale this year, but he was also at CIY, leading our freshman boys. Invest into the life of one student, touch numerous lives for Jesus.

This is Heath. He got involved in The Creek when he was in high school. A young lady his age named Caroline got baptized just a few months later. They fell in love, did their relationship God's way, got married. They are both serving here every week, leading a life group. Caroline is on our staff. They have dedicated their two boys here and are raising their kids to know, love, and follow Jesus.

This is Darrell. He was invited to church about three years ago. He was baptized and gave his life to the Lord in the summer of 2022. Since then, he has grown on fire in his faith. You've seen him around here, not only helping lead us in worship on the keyboard, but he has baptized 47 of his friends! Forty-seven! Talk about a compounding, exponential return.

Psalms 145:4 says, "One generation commends your works to another." That's what we are going to be about as a church! We sit under shade trees other people planted, and by God's grace, we plant trees that others will enjoy for years to come, even after we are gone. That's the way God designed his kingdom and his family to work.

[To end the service, Dan had the congregation pray for students, teachers, and volunteers. Then he prayed that the congregation will shine the light of Jesus and live on mission for God's glory. Finally, he led the congregation in celebrating communion.]