

For the Generations
Pastor Joe Oakley 10-29-23

The fight of your life is not the fight for your career, your finances or your health. The fight of your life is the fight for your family and future generations.

We have an enemy whose goal is to steal, kill and destroy. He wants to steal our children, kill our marriages and destroy our families. Everything he does is geared towards dividing our families and leading our children astray. All it takes for him to succeed is for us to do nothing!

Most people would not intentionally hurt their families. But many are unintentionally hurting them... by doing nothing! Most men would die for their families. But many miss the bigger challenge of living for them!

For families to work the way God intends for them to, we must do God's will in God's way to get God's results! And He has called us to have a heart for the generations. And that call is to all generations. That's why I'm preaching a message titled For the Generations. Psalm 78:4-7 says:

We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord, about His power and His mighty wonders. For He issued his laws to Jacob; He gave His instructions to Israel. He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children, so the next generation might know them—even the children not yet born—and they in turn will teach their own children. So each generation should set its hope anew on God, not forgetting His glorious miracles and obeying His commands.

Every generation has responsibility here. Of course, the older generation has the responsibility to teach the young, but the younger also has the responsibility to trust and obey God. Psalm 145:4-5 says:

One generation will commend Your works to another; they will tell of Your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and will meditate on Your wonderful works.

So, **every generation has the responsibility to encourage other generations** – both older and younger – to trust God, hope in God and praise God.

I want to share with you two biblical stories that demonstrate the need for every generation to have a heart for all generations.

One of the godliest kings in the Old Testament was Hezekiah. Yet, Hezekiah did not pass on a godly heritage to his son, Manasseh, who became the worst, most evil king in the history of Israel. How was a godly generation followed by such an evil generation?

In 2 Kings 20 – the prophet Isaiah told Hezekiah to get his house in order because he was going to die. 2 Kings 20:2-3 says:

Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, "Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

God heard his prayer and told Isaiah to go back with this message:

I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Look, I will heal you... I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. Then Isaiah said, "Bring a lump of pressed figs." So they brought it and applied it to his infected skin, and he recovered.

So Hezekiah was healed by God – using medicine. Then, in 2 Kings 20:16-18 the prophet Isaiah said to Hezekiah,

Hear the word of the Lord: The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood, that will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

Wow! That's a tough word to hear about your own flesh and blood. But here's what happened next in verse 19.

"The word of the Lord you have spoken is good," Hezekiah replied. For he thought, "Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime?"

What? Now wait a minute. When Hezekiah was told he would die, he cried for himself. But when he was told his children would be carried away, he did not shed a tear. When Hezekiah was told he would die, he prayed to the Lord. But when he was told his children would be made slaves, he uttered not a word. Hezekiah was very concerned for himself, but he did not care that his sons would be made eunuchs, which meant they would have no children of their own.

In other words, Hezekiah fought for himself – but not for his family.

He cared for himself, but not for his kids.

He prayed for himself, but not for his family.

He had no concern for the generations.

He did not care if his children were taken away as long as he got to stay.

He did not care that his children were slaves as long as he was free.

He did not care that his children were at war as long as he had peace.

Hezekiah showed absolutely no concern for his children or the generations that followed him!

That was a recipe for disaster!

And it's a recipe for disaster now!

He did not care for the generations and that's one reason why his son was the most evil king in the history of Israel. And today's older generation must care for the younger generations or the same things will happen to us and our families.

Here's the other story. First Kings 11 records the death of Solomon and his son Rehoboam becoming king of Israel. 1 Kings 12:1 says: ... *all Israel gathered to make him king*. The leaders and people of Israel said to Rehoboam in verses 4-19:

"Your father was a hard master," they said. "Lighten the harsh labor demands and heavy taxes that your father imposed on us. Then we will be your loyal subjects." Rehoboam replied, "Give me three days to think this over. Then come back for my answer." So the people went away.

Then King Rehoboam discussed the matter with the older men who had counseled his father, Solomon. "What is your advice?" he asked. "How should I answer these people?"

The older counselors replied, "If you are willing to be a servant to these people today and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your loyal subjects." But Rehoboam rejected the advice of the older men and instead asked the opinion of the young men who had grown up with him and were now his advisers. "What is your advice?" he asked them. "How should I answer these people who want me to lighten the burdens imposed by my father?"

The young men replied, "This is what you should tell those complainers who want a lighter burden: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist! My father laid heavy burdens on you, but I'm going to make them even heavier! My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!'"

Three days later the people returned for Rehoboam's decision.

But Rehoboam spoke harshly to the people, for he rejected the advice of the older counselors and followed the counsel of his younger advisers. He told the people, "My father laid heavy burdens on you, but I'm going to make them even heavier! My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions!"

So the king paid no attention to the people... When all Israel realized that the king had refused to listen to them, they responded, "Down with the dynasty of David! We have no interest in the son of Jesse. Back to your homes, O Israel! Look out for your own house, O David!"

So the people of Israel returned home. But Rehoboam continued to rule over the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah. And to this day the northern tribes of Israel refuse to be ruled by a descendant of David.

Hezekiah showed no concern for the younger generations. Rehoboam showed not concern for the older generations. Both were terribly wrong and the results were destructive and divisive. Rehoboam's lack of concern for the generations divided the nation of Israel into 2 kingdoms.

For a family to function properly, for a church to work, for a nation to work, every generation must care for every other generation.

Otherwise we will be divided also. Here's three things we must do to fight for the generations:

1. Being "for the generations" means we must care for all generations.

How do we do that? By telling them and showing them we love them! What we say to each other is vitally important. Proverbs 18:21 says:

Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

Are your words consistently building others up or tearing them down? Are you speaking life or death to other generations? Blessing or curses?

It's easy to get into a habit of disrespecting other generations. Some older people are writing off millennials and young generations. But we must determine to never give up on them and always speak life to them!

Some younger people are writing off the older generations instead of respecting them and learning from them. 1 Timothy 5:1-2 says:

Never speak harshly to an older man, but appeal to him respectfully as you would to your own father. Talk to younger men as you would to your own brothers. Treat older women as you would your mother, and treat younger women with all purity as you would your own sisters.

Obviously, this assumes you are treating you own family right! God wants every generation to respect and love other generations. 1 Peter 5:5 says:

Young men, be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

The Bible says that all of us – young and old – all generations must be humble toward other generations. Being humble is the opposite of being proud and arrogant. Being humble means that you seek to serve others. And if we aren't humble, God will resist us.

Being a multi-ethnic church is very difficult to attain and maintain because of all the racial division in our culture. And being a multi-generational church is hard to attain and maintain.

For instance, we have been trying to establish a young adult ministry for a long time. The problem is finding someone to lead it. I remember years ago I approached a young man about helping us start a young adult ministry. He refused to do so and when I asked him why he said that most people his age did not want to attend church with older people. They want to attend a church with just young people.

I was shocked because I knew he attended Bible school and his dad is a pastor, so I said, “You know that’s not biblical, right? The Bible says for the older men and women to teach and train the younger men and women. How will you obey that command if you are all young?” He just shrugged and then found a church of young people to join.

That was extremely sad to me. What also saddens me is when older people have no vision for younger generations. They selfishly want to hang on to old traditions, old song styles, and old ways of doing church and as a result their churches are dying.

I’m so blessed by the older generation at GFC. They don’t enjoy all the songs or the volume or some of the newer ways of doing church, but they have a vision for the generations! They have a vision for their children and grandchildren and they are willing to change in order to reach the younger generations! I thank God for them!

Older folks – part of your mission is to love and mentor the younger ones. Younger folks – part of your mission is to love and respect the older ones. We all do that by telling them and by showing them. That’s how we close generations gaps.

2. Being “for the generations” means we must be there for all generations.

That requires taking time to get to know people from different generations. Think of ways to be a blessing and to show your love for them. Ask them questions about themselves and try to get into their world.

This is true in families too. The American Academy of Pediatrics reports that by the time American children are 6 years old, they have spent more time watching TV than will spend talking to their dad over the course of their entire lifetime.

I know you’re busy – but we all have the same amount of time. To a child, love is spelled T-I-M-E. **To any generation, love is spelled T-I-M-E.** Don’t buy into the myth of quality time over quantity time. Your child needs both. Some parents are so busy with what they are doing FOR their families that they have no time to spend WITH their families.

Parents - you can do this. Carve out a little time for each child. Talk to them. Enter their world. Find out what they like to do and do it with them. The key to being there for your kids is doing what they like to do!

Think of ways to show each of your children how special they are to you. Take a little of your time and invest it in your children. **To win the fight for your family – you must be there for them!**

I encourage the older generations to get involved in ministering to younger generations – children – youth – young adults – new believers. It's a biblical principle found in 2 Timothy 2:2

You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.

God thinks generationally and so must we! Every one of us has a responsibility to disciple the next generation!

3. Being there for the generations means we offer prayer for all generations

Deb and I started praying for our children before we even had any children. That's because we knew we were not smart enough or strong enough to raise our children without God's help. **I can tell you right now with total certainty that we will not win this fight for the generations without prayer.** James 4:2 says:

You do not have, because you do not ask God.

There are battles we have not won because we haven't prayed. There is supernatural power we have not released because we have not prayed. Winning the fight for your family and generations requires tapping into the supernatural power of God through prayer.

I've learned that praying for our children is a life-long necessity! We must be persistent! If you aren't praying for your family, you should start. If you aren't praying for other generations, you should start. And if you really don't care about other generations, here's a good place to start. Malachi 4:5-6 says:

I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.

This is serious to God! If our hearts are not turned toward other generations, we need to pray for God to turn our hearts, to put love for the generations in our hearts.

And please be praying for us in this important area of young adult ministry. We have children and youth covered, but not those in their 20's. It takes all of us to build a church for the generations together!

We all have a responsibility to reach this generation. If you don't have children or if your children are already grown, you can still help.

Young adults make some of the best mentors for teens because they are close to their age. Senior adults make great mentors because of their wisdom. Also, because of divorce, many children are cut off from grandparents. It takes all of us to make families work. So I encourage everyone to take an interest in children and teens.

Nehemiah was a man who went to Jerusalem to help the people because the walls of the city were torn down and the enemy could come and go as he pleased. Some of our families are so broken that they enemy can come and go as he pleases. People in every generation have broken places that allow the enemy in.

When Nehemiah started rebuilding, all the enemies came against him. When we are building up generations, the enemy will try to stop us too. When enemies came against Jerusalem, Nehemiah said in Nehemiah 4:14

Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.

Verse 17 says: *They did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other.*

We too have an awesome God – but **we must build our families by working with one hand and warring with the other.**

If you build anything great, it takes work and warfare. It takes work and warfare to build a church. It takes work and warfare to build a family.

Now, you might not know how to war for your family. You can start by saying this on a regular basis – “Devil, you can’t have my family. You can’t have the future generations!” Then, I encourage you to pray the Word of God because God said in Jeremiah 1:12, God says, *I am watching over My word to perform it.*

The devil will try to tell you your child can never learn – but you speak the truth of Isaiah 54:13 *All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.*

The devil will try to tell you that you child will never get saved, but you speak the truth of Isaiah 49:25 where God said *I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save.*

The devil will try to tell you that you child will never be filled with the Spirit, but you speak the truth of Acts 2:38-39 *Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children.*

The devil will try to tell you your child will never serve the Lord – but you speak the promise of Joshua 24:15 *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

I haven't seen it happen yet – it's not happening right now – it may not happen next week, next month or next year – but I'm not giving up! I'll always care – I'll always be there – and I'll always be in prayer!

As for me and my house, WE WILL serve the Lord!