



Sermon Title: Generation to Generation

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. When you were growing up, how much influence did your extended family have on you (for example, grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.)?
2. How have you been influenced by the older generations in the church?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Why did John write these verses in the way that he did (e.g. repeating himself, in poetic form)?
2. The focus of this message is affirmation. *Read 1 John 2:12-14.*
Why was it important for John to affirm his first readers?
Why is it important for us to receive affirmation about our standing in the faith?
3. Pastor Ashwin said that “the longing for forgiveness is universal”. What are some different ways that people in the world try to deal with their ‘sin problem’? How is life different when we have the assurance of forgiveness of sins through the name of Jesus?
4. John tells the elder generation that they “have known him who is from the beginning.” What does it mean to you to know/experience God? Give an example.
5. Pastor Ashwin mentioned that the forces of evil are especially arrayed against those who are younger. How is this true today? Even in the midst of the battle, how can John say that those who are younger have already overcome?

OUT Seek to be the Community of God’s people in your community

1. What does it mean to “pass/receive the baton” of faith?
2. If you are a younger person, how can you reach out to those more advanced in years to gain from their knowledge and experience with God? If you are in the older generation, how can you reach out to encourage those who are younger? What role does listening play in these relationships?
3. How can these assurances (forgiveness of sins, victory in spiritual warfare, experience with God) be a part of how we reach out with the gospel to those in our lives?

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Which of the reminders in these verses did you most need to hear? Pray that God would bring home the reality that you are forgiven, you have overcome because of what Jesus has done, and that you know the One who is from the beginning.

THE WORD (NIV)

1 John 2:12-14

Reasons for Writing

¹² I am writing to you, dear children,

because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

¹³ I am writing to you, fathers,

because you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men,

because you have overcome the evil one.

¹⁴ I write to you, dear children,

because you know the Father.

I write to you, fathers,

because you know him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men,

because you are strong,

and the word of God lives in you,

and you have overcome the evil one.

Psalm 71:18

Even when I am old and gray,

do not forsake me, my God,

till I declare your power to the next generation,

your mighty acts to all who are to come.

1 Timothy 4:12

Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

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Generation to Generation

The Apostle John was forced to leave Jerusalem because of intense persecution. He migrated to Asia, (modern-day Turkey). His ministry thrived and many became followers of Christ. But certain members of the community brought in false teachings, creating confusion in some believers. Therefore, the Apostle wrote 1 John: a) to ruthlessly condemn the false teachers and teachings so as to bring believers back to their Christian faith. b) to gently affirm the believers who had begun to doubt their salvation and faith.

Now in 1 John 2:12-14, John writes to three groups — children, fathers and mothers, and young men and women. Who are these three groups of people? Some Bible interpreters claim these are actually stages of spiritual maturity. But as we look closer, the markers used don't reflect a hierarchy of believers, rather they are age groups.

So looking at the three groups, John uses the word "children" to refer to his entire audience. As an elderly Apostle, John considered everyone as his children. In 1 John 2:12, John writes to them: "that your sins have been forgiven on account of His (Jesus') Name".

The longing for forgiveness is universal. People of many religions search and hope for this forgiveness: some walk on their knees up a flight of stairs. Others make dangerous pilgrimages to distant lands. Still others mortify their bodies. But we don't *earn* forgiveness — we *receive* it. Forgiveness is God's gift, not human achievement. Your sins — past, present and future—have been nailed to the cross. God remembers your sins no more. There is no greater affirmation than that!

John Bunyan illustrates forgiveness in *Pilgrims Progress*. "Christian" is on his way to the Celestial City. He carries the heavy burden of sin and shame on his back. As he comes to the foot of the cross, he falls on his knees, and the burden tumbles to the ground. Christian is greatly relieved to never again carry that burden. What a profound imagery of forgiveness of sin! We claim our forgiveness with utmost confidence because of Christ's work on the cross.

The Apostle John next speaks to two subgroups of his "children": the older and younger generations. Twice he commends the older generation, "because you know him who is from the beginning" (1 John 2: 13a, 14a). John uses the word "knowledge", to refer not to intellectual knowledge, but to experiential knowledge. The mothers and fathers in John's congregation had been eye witnesses of Jesus, and so had experiential knowledge of Him.

Today many older believers have been Christians for a long time. Walking with Jesus for a lifetime is special. Spiritual maturing, character formation and Christian disciplines take years to develop. You possess a valuable treasure of how Jesus has helped and sustained you through life's ups and downs. You have seen God's faithfulness over a lifetime!

Your official career may be finished at age 65, but not your ministry. God often accomplishes His best work in the last two decades of life. These years could be your most fruitful and productive in terms of influence and character formation! In addition, your mission is to declare the power of God to the next generation! The Psalmist attests this when he writes: "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come (Psalm 71:18). The greatest legacy you can pass on to your children, grandchildren and spiritual children, is your faith and your experience of God. Take for your model one of the many older Biblical people mentoring the young: Moses and Joshua, Eli and Samuel, Naomi and Ruth, Mordecai and Esther, Elijah and Elisha, or Paul and Timothy.

Next, John writes at length to the young women and men, commending them twice (1 John 2:13b, 14b), "because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you and you have overcome the evil one". Not—you *have to be* strong—but you *are* strong. Not—the word of God *better be* living in you—but it *is* living in you. Not—you *need to* overcome the enemy—but you *have already* overcome the enemy! You are a model and the older generations can learn from your faith and your passion. Paul wrote in 1 Tim 4:12: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity". God sees your potential and what you can accomplish for His kingdom.

This brings us to many powerful reasons to have cross-generational connections within the spiritual family. The younger generations face the brunt of Satanic onslaughts and massive attempts to derail their faith. Young people also battle peer pressure. Peers are not enough, because they are facing the same issues. Youth, you need the help of the older generation to ensure that God's word is living in you and that you have the right priorities! Parents, your home is vital for spiritual formation, but you also need your extended family and spiritual family for the formation of faith in your kids! For the older generation, rather than criticize the younger generation, start believing in our youth. This will give them the affirmation they are longing for!

We also need to intentionally create environments where different generations can come together. Invite people of different generations for a meal to your home. Minister together in special projects. Teenagers, invest in children. Young adults, invest in teenagers. Older men and women, invest in young adults. Empty nesters, encourage young parents.

To conclude: In the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, the American women's team was favored to win the gold medal in the 4x100 metre relay race. The team featured Marion Jones, a sprinter who had won four gold medals at the previous games in Sydney. In the finals, the American team was already off to a strong start when Jones took the baton. She ran her 100 metres with a lead over others. But when she tried passing the baton to her teammate, Marion Jones failed on three attempts. Finally on the fourth try, the two runners made the connection. But by that time, they had run beyond the 20-metre exchange zone and were disqualified.

How true this is in the Christian race. Ultimate success is exchanging the baton between the generations. For the older generation, to declare to the next generation God's power and faithfulness and the centrality of Jesus. For the younger generation, to receive God's power and faithfulness and the centrality of Jesus from older generations!