



The Harvester

*Preparing Souls
To Serve The Lord!*

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Six Steps for Minimizing Generational Friction

Rick Kenyon

Long before generations studies existed, Job wrote, “Please inquire of past generations, and consider the things searched out by their fathers. For we are only of yesterday and know nothing, because our days on earth are as a shadow” (Job 8:8-9, NASB). The reality is that life is short, and no person or generation has all the answers. The definition and length of a “generation” was probably different during Job’s lifetime, but currently there are six generations co-existing on earth.

Generation	Born	Ages Now (2023)
Gen Z	1997-2012	11-26
Millennials	1981-1996	27-42
Gen X	1965-1980	43-58
Boomers II (a.k.a. Gen Jones)	1955-1964	59-68
Boomers I	1946-1954	69-77
Post War [Silent Gen]	1928-1945	78-95
WW II	1922-1927	96-101

These dates are best understood as guidelines and vary from researcher to researcher. Each of these generations have characteristics, worldviews, and values that define the generation. (For a deeper breakdown, see the University of South Florida’s PDF, “Generational Differences Chart” [<https://www.usf.edu/hr-training/documents/lunch-bytes/generationaldifferenceschart.pdf>]).

Every person in the church belongs to a generational class. You may not identify with every characteristic of your class (or with what they say about

other generations), but there is wisdom in recognizing the differences. During the time of King David, the men of Issachar were identified as “men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do” (1 Chr. 12:32). As the church advances through time, leaderships and people change with each generation. The transition of one generation to another can cause friction. Friction can be harmful (rubbing your knees or elbows across carpet or concrete), or friction can be helpful (rubbing sandpaper across rough wood). Growth is often painful, but necessary for survival and development. As the body of Christ grows its multi-generational family, here are some considerations for minimizing negative generational friction.

Be Humble

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves” (Phil. 2:3, NASB). Jesus commanded, “truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 18:2-3). Humility seeks to demonstrate how others matter and are important. Every generation has strengths and weaknesses, and there is no generation that should lift itself above others. A humble-minded Millennial sees the value in Gen-Z values and respects the ways and traditions of Boomers. Humility does not negate open dialogue, but it does seek to understand each other. Jesus transcends times and brings salvation to every

generation. When we encounter older or younger people within the church, remember to communicate and show one another why we are grateful for everyone in the church. No matter the age, every person bears the image of God, and we can always respect God's image.

Avoid Stereotypes

"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (Jn. 7:24). It is easy (and unfair) to pass judgement on an individual when we know only what we have heard about "those people." Generational stigmas exist within the church but should never be used to define individuals. Any attempt to define a person based solely on a birth year and "research data" will create more friction than facts. Phrases like, "your generation" or "my generation" are polarizing statements that automatically put people on the defensive. The devil is skilled in turning us against each other, but our Christ-like love for one another should prevent us from that entrapment. Jesus defied stereotypes of His day by talking to the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4), dining with tax collectors and sinners (Mt. 9:10-11), and healing a Canaanite's daughter (Mt. 15:21-28). When it comes to generation stereotypes, beware not to accuse someone of "being a typical [insert generation name]." Remember that we belong to Christ, and we are atypical (by being Christ-like) in our treatment of each other and people—

"In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, of this is the Law and the Prophets" (Mt. 7:12).

Find Common Ground

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). In the church, we all exist on the same spiritual plane—an undeniable need for a Savior. Our age does not affect that fact. Every generation experiences sin-induced guilt and no generation had the solution to it — Jesus alone is the only cure. Even apart from salvation, our human experiences frame out common ground: joys in births and marriage; frustrations from jobs; grief from losing loved ones. Do not overlook similarities that can connect us. Our goals are often similar, but how we reach them may be different. Even the priorities of emphasis may differ from one generation to the next. "It is the Lord Christ whom you serve" (Col. 3:24), not self nor our friends. If our mind is unified (1 Cor. 1:10) and we all have the same goal of loving God, loving people, and living like Jesus, then our different approaches should not destroy us. They will not be stumbling blocks to tear us down, but

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Learn From One Another

“Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe” (1 Tim. 4:12). Older men and women in the church are to exhibit godly qualities to those who are younger, while the younger are to echo the same godly qualities (Titus 2:1-8). Experience is the most personal teacher one can encounter. God’s wisdom dictates that those with the more experience should be able to share that experience with those who have less. Similarly, no matter the age of a person, each person’s experience is unique (despite age), and we as the body of Christ recognize that every member matters (cf. Rom. 12:4- 5; Eph. 4:16). Our job is not to “fix” the wrongs of other generations, but to “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works” (Heb. 10:24, ESV). Older generations may teach younger generations about “the good ole days,” while younger generations could teach older generations about “those computer machines.” Every generation has meaningful information and lessons to transfer.

Tailor Communication Style

“Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the young men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and the young women as sisters, in all purity” (1 Tim. 5:1-2). Children are to communicate respect and honor to their parents (Eph. 6:1-2). Communication is already difficult among people who share our age, so trying to figure out how to communicate with different ages may require extra effort. Everyone has a default range of communication that allows us to connect easier with some over others. Generationally, there may be a breakdown due to word use or style. The goal is not to be “hip” or “cool” or “rad” or whatever generational word you want to use. The goal is to provide meaningful communication to encourage our brethren and strengthen our relationships. We may have to re-word or change our tone depending on who you are addressing. Even approaches may need to be altered. Younger generations may respond better to digital methods of communication while older generations connect better with face-to-face. The hopeful news for Christians is that we all seek God.

Most communication breakdowns have nothing to do with ears and tongues, but everything to do with the heart. Speak with love. Listen with love... and the result will always be love.

Be Flexible

“I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22). Rigid movements are limited in their range and when forced beyond their framework will tear or break. When we refuse to adapt our communication or styles of work, it can tear and break relationships among individuals and even generations. Have we not seen or heard of congregations splitting between the “young” and the “old”? Have there not been congregations that are identified by their generational demographics? There is a delicate balance in bridging the generation gaps within the church. “I don’t do technology” may be the prevailing voice of an older generation, but this should not prevent the church from advancing its communication methods to encourage the saved and reach the lost. Similarly, this should not embolden younger generations (in the name of divine progress) to trample the traditions of their seniors by disregarding their honed practices and approaches of yesteryear. Being open-minded provides great opportunities for growth: ways to connect with people; community outreach ideas; learning new worship songs; leadership approaches and evangelism. Flexibility permits each person and generation to move forward without damaging relationships and harming the Lord’s body.

Conclusion

No matter the age, people matter to God. “For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations” (Ps. 100:5). Christians should be undeniable reflections of that love and care. James encapsulates it this way: “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (1:27). Orphans and widows are on the opposite ends of the generation spectrum, yet everyone is called to care for those in need ... whatever the need, whatever the age.

In the end, there are no generations saved or condemned based solely on their age demographic. The “stubborn and rebellious generation” is characterized by those who: forget the works of God, do

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not keep his commandments, do not prepare their hearts, and lack a faithful spirit (Ps. 78:7-8). No age limit required. Whatever generation we are a part, let us live and work in such a way that Jesus will never call us a “generation of vipers” (Mt. 12:34). Rather:

Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world. (Phil. 2:14-15) 



Pictured: Forest Antemesaris (faculty), Ben Radford (board member); Trevor, and Brian

BIG Congratulations & Thank You!

This time of year brings joy to FSOP and to our supporters because we are blessed to celebrate another student graduating and “going into all the world to preach the gospel” (Mk. 16:15)! Trevor Dees graduated May 14, 2023, and already accepted a full-time work. His being here as a student and completing the two year program would not have been possible without his and his wife’s commitment or without the support of individuals and local churches of Christ! For this reason we give a BIG congratulations to Trevor and a BIG thank you to those who financially supported of him over these last two years! There are more men like Trevor in local churches of Christ (perhaps even the one of which you are a member) who need encouragement to become preachers. Please encourage them, send them to the Florida School of Preaching, and help support them!