

- ***Read Judges 2*** Fresh off the conquest of Canaan, we find that the end of Joshua's life is imminent. The angel of the Lord comes before all the people, and reminds the people that because of their failure to completely drive out the Canaanites, these people would constantly be a thorn in their sides for years to come. The people are upset by this news, but they make sacrifice to the Lord and go on to their lands to live and possess the land that God had given them as an inheritance.
- Up until the death of Joshua, the people were faithful to God in what they did. These people had seen the mighty and great works of God, and they knew that truly He was the one true God of heaven. Sadly, upon the deaths of Joshua and all of the people of his generation...the people turned away from the Lord. **V.10** leaves us with a very sad and sobering picture...there rose a generation who did not know the Lord. They did not know about the mighty and great works of His Hand, and because of this they were not willing to follow God in all that they did. Instead of faithfulness to God, this next generation did evil in the sight of God and they served the Baals. They sought after the gods of the people around them and they bowed down to them. Certainly, we are not shocked that this would be the reaction of the Lord. He had done so much for these people, yet they turned their back on Him. Because of their rejection of God, these people were continually oppressed. They were in constant strife. They were against the hand of the Lord. Even when God, for their good, appointed judges...they still rebelled. Sure they would periodically call out to God, and in His mercy He would heed and heal them...yet they would just eventually turn away from Him again. The story of Israel was one of many ups...yet they also suffered many downs in the process.
- How was it that they got to this point? How did the people get to the point where they didn't serve the Lord as they did during the days of Joshua? I think that answer has already been stated...There arose a generation who did not know the Lord. This year, we are considering the idea of Serving the Kingdom. Certainly, we would say that an important part of serving God's Kingdom is doing what we can to ensure that those who come after us are ready and prepared to carry on the faith just as we strive to do in our generation. It is important for us to serve the next generation in preparing them for the time when they will stand in our place and continue on the progress of the Kingdom of God.
- I believe it is important for us to recognize that those who come after us will do as they decide to do. No amount of teaching or instructing will perfectly ensure that those who come after us will continue on as they ought, but that does not mean that we can slack off on our duty of serving them as we ought to. Many in this audience this morning have been serving the next generation as parents, grandparents, teachers, role models, and like positions. This morning's lesson will hopefully reinforce the fact that we serve important roles as servants of the next generation and may we continue in those old and new roles as best we can for our Lord and those we love. Let's consider 5 things that we can do this morning to serve the next generation.

5 Things We Can Do To Serve the Next Generation

I. Teach In The Home

- A. Sadly, we live in a world where many parents leave their responsibilities of parenting to other people. Many parents leave their responsibilities to teach and raise their children to day care workers, school teachers, baby sitters, and the like. We must be careful to not fail our children by thinking that others will raise them in the way that they should go. It is our responsibility to raise our children, and in no realm is this more important than when it comes to teaching our children about God in our homes.
- B. A couple of weeks ago, we considered some teachings from **Deuteronomy 6**. If you remember, in that Text, Moses stresses to the parents of Israel the importance of making the teaching and learning of the Lord a top priority. (**Deut. 6:6-9**) Paul continues this theme of parents taking on the responsibility to teaching their children in **Ephesians 6:4**.
- C. In fact, the desire of God for children to learn of Him and how to be good and righteous people from their parents is seen all throughout Scripture. Consider how books such as **Proverbs & Ecclesiastes** are set up. They are framed from the standpoint of an older & wise parent figure to a younger person who would benefit greatly from listening to the teaching and advice of those who have come before them.
- D. How can we be committed to teaching our children? When our children are young, God needs to simply be present. Prayer, singing, reading of the Word will familiarize even the smallest of children with God. As they grow older, we can deepen our discussion of God. We can sit down together and get Bible lessons done. We can simply make sure that God is constantly present in their lives.

- E. Our daily Bible reading schedule is a great tool to use to make sure that God is ever present in our homes. We must recognize that if God is not present in the lives of our children while they are in our homes...then why would we expect for Him to be present once they leave our watch and care. We can serve the next generation well by teaching our children while we have opportunity.

II. Lead By Example

- A. While the primary responsibility of teaching and raising children falls to the parents, we must recognize that each and every one of us shares a responsibility to serve the next generation by leading them forward by our own godly examples.
- B. As I was considering this lesson, I kept thinking about Jesus and His relationship with His Apostles. Jesus not only did what was necessary in regards to establishing His Church, but He also gave great effort to prepare His Apostles to be the leaders of this Church.
- C. Consider the example that Jesus said He left for His Apostles when He washed their feet. He made a point to tell them that this was an example that they should follow in regards to their service towards one another and others. **(John 13:15)**
- D. Someone might pipe up and say..."but Jesus was perfect in His example! I'm not perfect, so how can I be a good example." While it is true that we are not perfect, that does not mean that our lives cannot serve the young generations through our example. As Christians, we are not to continue in sin. **(Rom. 6:1,2)** While we might not be perfect, that doesn't mean that we should habitually sin and therefore give a poor example for others to follow. Joshua and his contemporaries failed at times...yet they are still commended for their faith and they were people that the next generation could look up to.
- E. Paul was not a perfect person, yet he still admonished the Corinthians to imitate his example. But how can Paul tell them to do that when he himself stumbled from time to time? Even in our failures...we can serve as great examples to those coming up after us by bouncing back well from our mistakes.
- F. We first must want to live as godly examples, but then we also want to serve as good examples in how we can come back from our mistakes. In doing these things, the next generation can be served well.

III. Show Their Importance

- A. In order to show the next generation that they are important, we must recognize their importance to this world and the future success of the Lord's Church. While it is certainly true that the next generation serves a vital role in the church today, **(Eph. 4:16)** it must also be recognized that one day the next generation will stand where we stand, today, as leaders of the Lord's Church. Part of serving and preparing them well is showing them that they are important within the church.
- B. We know that Jesus felt that His Apostles were important because He gave them so much of His time in teaching them what they needed to know. In much the same way, the next generation will know they are important by the amount of time we invest in them.
- C. Events such as VBS, young people's weekends, and our young people's home studies show our young people that we want them to grow and be prepared for their future. Our giving of time to the next generation can easily be seen as an investment in the future. The more we invest in time, attention, and effort towards the next generation...the better chance we have of having them be strong as successful as the church on earth in the future. We will be doing the next generation a great service by showing how important they are in our eyes and the eyes of God.

IV. Be Patient With Their Struggles

- A. One of the things we recognize that comes with the territory of being younger is the propensity for making mistakes because of a lack of wisdom. It can become very easy for the younger generations to become discouraged by their mistakes because there is no one there to lift them up. However, it is the responsibility of the older generations to lift up the heads of those who are broken because of sin.
- B. In **Galatians 6:1,2**, the Apostle Paul says that we are to strive to restore and lift up our brethren that have been caught up on sin. The next generation needs all the encouragement that they can get to overcome their struggles and grow in their faith and service to God. Their mistakes do not have to sink their faith, and they can come back from their mistakes and shortcomings if they receive the encouragement that we can give them.
- C. Let us not forget that we were once in their shoes. We were once young people who didn't know the right thing to do at all times. We were once that person who had struggled and made mistakes. When we were in those moments...what helped us to get back up and give effort to do better?

- D. Certainly, we understand that those who were older than we were who helped pick us up and encourage us to do better were the ones that helped us progress in our faith. In the same way, we must help to be patient and encourage the next generation when they make mistakes. This isn't to say that the mistakes are acceptable, but we get it. We get that mistakes happen, but we want the next generation to be able to grow and get past their struggles and mistakes.

V. Pray For Their Success

- A. There are many things that we can do that will impact the future successes of the next generation, but we know that God is the one who can truly help the next generation to be successful in what they do.
- B. Jesus recognized the absolute necessity of prayer...and He understood how much He needed to be praying for His Apostles. Just before His death, we find Jesus, in **John 17:9-19**, going before His Father and asking that He be with His Apostles after He has left them to return to heaven. Jesus's trust was fully in God, and we would do well to do the same.
- C. Our faith and trust must be put in God and His ability to be with those we love and care for after we are gone from this life. We know that the prayers of the righteous have great power (**James 5:16**)
- D. Sometimes, we might get discouraged because we don't think that we are doing much to help those of the next generation, but may we never forget that we can follow the great example of Jesus and constantly pray for those who will be coming up after us. We can serve them well by putting our faith and trust in God for them for their success.

The present and the future of the Lord's Church can be seen all around us. The next generation that is coming up after us will either succeed or fail based upon their own decisions, but we can do a lot to serve them and set them up for success. The text of **Joshua 2:10**, is quite a sad one to consider...a whole generation of the people of Israel forsook the Lord and sought after themselves and the gods of the pagan people. May we do everything we can to help the next generation to avoid the pitfalls of Israel. May God be with the generations that come after us, and may we do our part to serve them well as pivotal members of the Lord's Kingdom.