

THE GENERATION GAP

One of our greatest challenges is to inspire the next generation to participate. If you grew up playing the violin, it is disheartening to see fewer and fewer children learning that instrument. If your passion was sitting down for a challenging game of chess (with a person, not a computer), and nobody is learning to play anymore, it's discouraging. If you were an avid softball player, and there are no longer enough girls in the community to make up a team, you miss hearing the crack of the bat at the local diamond. It only takes one generation of non-involvement to put the future of a sport, or skill, or interest into jeopardy.

The same is true of the Christian faith. In fact, in November 2013, Lord Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, reported that the Church of England is just "one generation away from extinction."

The Generation Gap that began in earnest in the 1960s is widening. One comic featured a mom holding out a large dictionary to her son, and explaining that, "This is a spell checker." Another one featured a dad pointing to the family set of encyclopedias, saying, "They're an early form of Google." Kids don't understand things we grew up with, and we don't understand things they are growing up with. The difference is highlighted in the terms "digital immigrants" and "digital natives." Digital natives are generally those born in or shortly before the 2000s and who have never known a world without the current technologies. The use of such technologies comes naturally to them. Digital immigrants are those of us who don't speak that language as our "mother tongue." That means we have to study hard and work hard to use those devices to their full capacity. We are immigrants to that "country," that way of life. Such a technological generation gap makes it increasingly hard for us to take the Christian faith to a new generation,

since we don't easily connect with their priorities.

1. READ: Exodus 13:14, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 26:5-9.

How were the Israelites to pass the faith on to the next generation? What was the content they were to pass on? Why are we to follow their example? How might we do this?

2. READ Genesis 28:1-4.

Despite Jacob's earlier deception of his father Isaac, how did Isaac make sure his son carried on in the faith of the true God? How might we do something similar?

3. READ 1 Kings 11:1-6

Sometimes parental encouragement, efforts and examples fail to have the desired effect on one's children. David was a man "after God's own heart." What happened to Solomon? What can we say or do to help those who struggle with way-ward children today?

4. One of the clearest Old Testament examples of taking faith to a new generation is found in Psalm 78. READ vv. 1-7a. What were people to tell the coming generation? Think of some specific examples from the Old Testament. What was the ultimate goal of that teaching?

5. One of the clearest New Testament examples of taking faith to a new generation is found in 2 Timothy. READ 1:5 and 3:14-17. Through whom was the faith passed on to Timothy? Through what was the faith passed on to Timothy? Paul refers to several uses of Scripture, but highlights one main purpose. What is that purpose? How

is it similar to the ultimate goal of the teaching from Psalm 78?

6. Psalm 78 talked about "the glorious deeds of the Lord...and the wonders that He has done." What would be some New Testament examples of God's wonders and glorious deeds? Can you recount any "glorious deeds" or "wonders" from your own life?

The rubber of your faith meets the road of life

Think of some "new generation" people that God has placed into your life—children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, young people in your church family, neighbour kids. What practical and relevant ways can you connect with them (even if it takes you out of your comfort zone) and connect them to God in Christ?

Prayer

Almighty God, I give You thanks today for the wonders and deeds You performed in ancient times on behalf of Your people, especially for the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for my salvation. I give You thanks for people who faithfully passed the Gospel on to me. [add their names here] There are many people in my world and even in my life who need to hear the good news of Your grace in Christ. [add their names here] Fill me with passion and boldness and courage to go out of my comfort zone, if that's what it takes, to share Jesus with them. Send Your Holy Spirit ahead of the witness of my word and deed to prepare their hearts so that, having heard of Your wonders and glorious deeds, they might set their hope in You; through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

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