



Bridging The Generation Gap

by Eva Juliuson

I've noticed a trend in today's church to separate age groups.

Some churches provide praise bands and encourage more casual dress to reach the younger generation. Traditional churches sing out of hymnals. Some are set against changing comfortable rituals that cater to older folks. In many cases, the division happens at the same church with

traditional and contemporary worship services at different times.

Sunday schools, Bible studies and fellowship activities are often divided into age groups. Is there a new generation gap forming in our church families?

A church filled with only older seasoned Christians will become

a virtual nursing home. They may have access to a tremendous amount of wisdom but no one younger to share it with. A church that caters only to the young will have plenty of enthusiasm but will suffer from the lack of encouragement and knowledge born out of experience. Just as a biological family is made up of babies, children, teens, adults and grandparents, so is a healthy church family. There's nothing wrong with having activities aimed at different age groups, as long as the church also finds ways to bring generations together so everyone can benefit.

Scripture tells us all ages should be respected. Every age has something to offer and every person is precious to God. God places all types of people in a church to work together for His kingdom. Through prayer and thought, churches should seek out ways to build bridges of opportunities for all generations to bond together in the love of our Lord.

Just as each member has a specific purpose in the body of Christ, so does each age group. We ought to encourage respect and unity between age groups, not separation.

How Can We Help?

We need a balance of worship, study, prayer, service and mission in our church. And we should provide opportunities for

all generations to share some of those things together. When different age groups get to share in all aspects of living for the Lord, we can all grow from the interaction.

Some churches encourage everyone from kids to seniors to participate in worship together. Other congregations have separate services for adults, youth and children. Perhaps after singing in one voice praise songs to the Lord in the sanctuary, the kids could go to Kids' Church in another room.

People of all ages can help feed the homeless or do a service project that will minister to someone else. What about having a home Bible study where several families with children and adults meet together to learn from God's Word? Think about the possibilities of special prayer services where young and old gather to pray. What if all ages gathered at the church to go on a prayer walk through the neighborhood?

It is a wonderful blessing to everyone involved when all ages work and worship side by side. Much is learned, shared and accomplished. Respect and love grow as we interact. Not only that, it is a testimony to those who witness God's love between His people of all ages. I'm sure it's a blessing to God as well.

Faithful Through Generations

God knew us when we were be-

ing knit together in our mother's womb. It is part of His plan that we grow from the time we are born to the time we die. We are still the same person, yet we are always changing. God is with us through every stage of life.

He desires that we all fit together in unity as His family. It is up to us to love others of all ages. It is up to us to find chances to mingle together in love. When we segregate by generations, we often miss out on the gifts He has given to people of other ages.

Each generation has a unique testimony of how God has helped them. God told us in Isaiah 51:8, "My righteousness will be forever, and My salvation to all generations." It would be prideful if we think our generation is the only one to understand God or to see Him at work.

The young are instructed to respect members of the older generation. They have earned their gray hairs. Many mistakes can be avoided by listening to their advice. On the other hand, the young should not be looked down upon because of their few years. God uses young willing hearts just as surely as anyone else. (Remember Samuel, David, King Josiah and Timothy.) Jesus told us we should be more child-like in our faith.

God is our God, but He is also the God of those who lived before us and those who will live after us. In fact, we might see even more of His glory if we bridge the gap between age groups to praise our wonderful God, Who faithfully reigns from generation to generation. †

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