

The Generation to Come

“We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.” Psalm 78:4

Growing into adulthood and watching grandparents and parents pass away has some sobering effects. One of those effects is the realization that there is no older generation to appeal to or lean on. My generation is now the one that holds the “mantle.” Sobering thought!

The church has always been just one generation away from extinction. Passing the faith to the next generation is not an option. At least in the western world, if we are to believe the statistics, we have not been doing a very good job. Part of the reason at least is that we have misunderstood; that we ourselves have not been truly converted. We have spent our lives divided between what we believe in our minds and what we live with our lives. We thought that knowledge was simply to know and believe certain facts; that Christianity is merely a doctrine to be agreed with and a set of rules to govern our treatment of people. We wanted to live our lives according to our own desires and God was there to help us achieve them. Wrong thinking!

Maybe passing *our* faith to the next generation is just what we have been doing... only we are not very impressed when we see it in them. Bad mirror!

Here are some difficult things to think about; things we must face in ourselves if we are going to “finish this race” well.

I have seen parents who go out of their way to make sure their child gets to sporting events, dance, gymnastics, band practice, and other such things, yet struggle to make sure they are in church on Sunday and participate in church education programs. What is the message here?

I have seen parents who rush to get their children to school, make sure through great pains that homework is done, take time to help in classrooms, participate in PTA, Boosters, and other school activities and events, but cannot seem to get to church regularly or on time. What is the message here?

I have been part of conversations with pastors and church leaders who believe that children are a huge priority but claim it is hard to get anyone to work with children in their churches. That recruiting children’s workers takes major effort with little results and having kids consistently participate in church programs is almost non-existent. What is the message here?

If children learn not so much from our words but from our actions, what are we really teaching them? What do our lives and our priorities say about God?

What message is being given when children see clipboards passed for children’s ministry and only a handful of signups are on them?

What message is being given when announcements are made for Sunday school teachers and the announcement is qualified by, "You only have to work once a month"(or maybe "every other week")?

What message is being given when training for children's workers is attended by a sparse representation of teachers, and that some teachers show up to teach late and poorly prepared?

What message is being given when we say that we want to reach young families in our community and yet when they arrive at church, have late nursery workers or worse yet, no nursery workers, who want to love and care for their children while they attempt to attend church to see if God really is for them?

How dare I to speak like this? How can I be so blunt about such things?

The Prophet Malachi spoke similar thoughts when He wrote to His people challenging them about their sacrifices and their offerings to the Lord. "Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly" (Malachi 1:8)? In the same way, none of us would behave with our employers, coaches, school teachers, bowling teams, or other relationships the way we behave with God and His work.

This could go on and on but I am sure the point is fairly clear. It is time we step into a genuine relationship with God and get our lives in line with our thoughts about God.

Although it is teacher recruitment time at NCCF, please don't take this letter as simply an attempt to recruit teachers. It says something about our lives period! We have an opportunity in front of us, and we dare not think that there is anyone else to respond. The "anyone else" is gone... we are it! There is no other generation to lean on.

We in this church have something to offer. We are doing God's business. There is a whole community of families outside the church that do not think God has anything to say to their lives. In light of what I have said, can you blame them? Yet this is our call from God and our time and resources are being called upon. Let us devote ourselves to this task and arise and show this world with our words and our actions that there is a God who loves them and He is worth following!

How dare we think that a different teacher (stranger!) each week in a 45minute Sunday school class is enough? How dare we think that working in the church nursery once every six weeks is enough to show those babies and parents how much God loves them. Stupid ideas!

I have a dream! That we would finish the race well! That we will together arise and really love this community and the children of this community, and show them in both word and action that God is real, that He is worth our best, that He is worthy to be on time for, to be inconvenienced for, to spend our resources on and yes, even to die for. That is the way the early church conquered their world. That is the way we will conquer ours.

Steve Calagna