

## LIVING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

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Sunday, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 10:00 a.m.

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**IPAD TEXT - Judges 2:7-12 - “And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel. [8] And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110 years. [9] And they buried him within the boundaries of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. [10] And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.” [11] And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. [12] And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers....”**

Sad words, these. The Lord shows these careless people something they should have seen coming but didn't. The **next** generation would reap the painful results of the easy neglect of the previous generation. I say **easy neglect** because the first generation didn't feel the actual **pain** of their neglect as fully as the next generation would. Nothing that drastic seemed to happen immediately. Their gradual cultural accommodation seemed painless. So there's a great call to carefulness here. The older generation is called to see what's coming down the road for the next generation.

Of course, we all **fail** the Lord at different times and in different ways. We are constantly in need of fresh repentance. But that's not the issue of Israel in this text. They were disobedient in a deeper sense than mere failure. Their disobedience was more **foundational** than that. They had failed to **drive out their enemies** when they **first** entered the Promised Land, and they **still** weren't driving them out. They had grown accustomed to **living** with what God said couldn't be accommodated.

Their original disobedience had become **ongoing** and **systemic**. And they persisted in their carelessness because initially there were no rapid effects from it. **They couldn't sense their own spiritual drift.**

Then we read of the **death of Joshua** in **verses 8-9**. This was a gigantic event for Israel. Joshua spent his whole life trying to turn the people away from their natural sinful inclinations, back to the ways of God. Sadly, this whole second chapter spins out the tale of the people's sin and God's judgment. It's a heart-breaking account. The core of today's teaching lies in **verses 7-12** of Judges chapter two:

- 1) **NOTICE THE IMPACT OF THE SECOND GENERATION SYNDROME**

**IPAD TEXT - Judges 2:10-11 - “And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And *there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.* [11] And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals.”**

**“And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers”(10).**

Which generation is he talking about? Joshua’s generation - the people who had entered the promised land. These were the people who had heard the words of Joshua - who saw the waters part and the walls of Jericho fall. That generation finally died off.

After Joshua’s generation died off, another generation came along after them, **“....*who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel*”(10).**

That’s all we’re told. They weren’t morally wicked at first. They didn’t stumble into idolatry right out of the gate. They probably ***intended***, at least at first, to continue in the faith of their parents and leaders. But they couldn’t do it. And the reason they couldn’t do it was they **“*didn’t know*”** something (2:10). And **“*not knowing*”** certain things will destroy you.

Actually, they were lacking **two** kinds of knowledge, not just **one**. They had no living **experience** of God - "**who did not know the Lord**" - and they had no **knowledge of what God had done in the past** - "**....or the work that He had done for Israel.**" I take that to mean **both** kinds of knowledge are needed. It's not enough just to be in some place where people really **encounter** God.

That's vitally important. People need their own personal experience of God's life and power, for sure. **And**, in addition to that, people need to be in some place where they regularly discipline themselves to **learn about what God has done in history**. They need **content** to understand and squeeze fruit out of their **experience**.

Pause and think about those words. **Two kinds of knowledge** are always necessary - not just one. Each generation needs its own **experience of God's reviving spiritual life**. **And** each generation **needs a deep understanding of God's words and ways**.

**Next** in sequence, **because** they didn't **know** certain important things, they soon bowed their lives to **idols** - "**And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals**"(11). This describes the sin they eventually committed. But they weren't **born** idolaters. They **defaulted** to idols because of the vacuum in their heads and hearts. When you don't know God and His works you can't help but fall in love with something else.

So it's important to read **verses 10 and 11** together - **“And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel. [11] And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals.”**

### **-IPAD TEXT**

It's important to remember this pattern. The people became idolaters **gradually**. There may have come a specific time when, for the very first time, that Israelite bowed in religious worship to that idol of Baal. But the **seeds** of that idolatry were prepared as the **memory** and **knowledge** of God slowly evaporated.

And here's the point to ponder. People who forget this truth rarely understand **why** sin just “pops up” the way it does in churches, families, and individuals.

There is always a **timing element** in the growth of either holiness or sin. That's why Paul always likened the growth of our souls - in either direction - to the time that passes between **sowing** and **reaping**. It takes an understanding of **sequence** to see the invisible connection between the first phase and the second.

- 2) **IT'S VITAL THAT EACH GENERATION CONSIDERS MORE THAN JUST ITS OWN SPIRITUALITY**

I'm still thinking about those same two verses from chapter two. The context surrounding **verses 10 and 11** is a bit chilling:

**IPAD TEXT - Judges 2:7-13 - "And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel. [8] And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110 years. [9] And they buried him within the boundaries of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of the mountain of Gaash. [10] And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel. [11] And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. [12] And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt."**

Notice those opening words of **verse 7 - "And the people served the Lord *all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel.*" - IPAD TEXT**

As long as two things happened the people served the Lord. **First**, they served the Lord as long as Joshua was there to keep **prodding** them to serve the Lord. And **second**, they kept serving the Lord as long as the memories of the great miracles of the past kept motivating them. After those two factors were removed the next generation forgot all about the Lord. That's the brief recap of those verses.

Now, here's what I want to say as I wrap up this message. There is another motive for godliness - a **third** factor. And without this third factor true godliness will never be propelled very far into the future. And the reason I want to **close** with this point is I think it's the one point most neglected in the direction much of the contemporary church is taking today. I'm hoping this will help us all remember it.

Here it is. ***You can't consistently make the most godly decisions in your present life until you consciously make those decisions for the next generation, not just your own.*** This is the point Paul makes in **Romans 14:7 - "For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself."** - IPAD TEXT

This is Paul's advice on how Christians should learn to evaluate their attempts to live for God. Here's the universal principle to apply. My life, Paul would say, isn't an *end in itself*. It's a *pattern* for others and a *pattern* for the next generation.

The Psalmist deals with the same issue again - **Psalm 78:5-8** - **“He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, [6] that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, [7] so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; [8] and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.”** - IPAD TEXT

How shall I live my life. How much time and attention shall I give to God? *You can't make that decision properly until you do something else first*. The Psalmist would invite you to look around this sanctuary today. See expectant mothers with swollen tummies. God has a plan for that unborn child - **“Psalm 78:6** - **“....that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children....”** God wants *you* and *me* to live our lives thinking about - *aiming our choices at* - that next generation following us.

I have had the blessing of living my life shaped by people - by parents and others - who suffered much for Jesus. I know it was a different era, but my father dug ditches for Canada Dredge and Dock so he could plant a church in Welland, Ontario in a day when there wasn't a dime of support coming from the District or anyone else. I've been taken to church three or four times a week when there was no children's church or supervised nursery. I was taken even when I hated being taken. As a child I saw adults quit great jobs at the close of a missionary convention and pack up their young families and spend the rest of their days as missionaries.

In other words, much of the convicting power that has shaped my walk with Jesus *wasn't* of my own doing. I was *shaped* by others just as often as I *shaped* my life by my own fortitude. My parents pretty well forced me to spend an hour each Sunday learning Bible stories in Sunday School. Lots of times it was in some dark old church basement or furnace room. The teachers weren't always exceptional. But I was there - every Sunday - for an hour.

You do the math. One hour per Sunday - fifty-two hours a year - over twenty years, one thousand hours of Bible stories. Then there were three church services a week. Three hours of Bible teaching a week - one hundred and fifty-six hours of Bible teaching a year - over twenty years, three thousand, one hundred and twenty hours of Bible teaching. Add that in with the Sunday School - four thousand, one hundred and twenty hours of Bible study by age twenty. All of that is now in me. It is not due to any special discipline on **my** part. Others were investing in the **next** generation. Now I take that stored up heritage into everything I do.