

"If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

This speech by Joshua that we know so well and even sing about often represented the high point in all of Israel's history up to this point. They had just finished a 7 year conquest of the land of Canaan by the great power of the LORD. They were finally settled in the land of milk and honey. And Joshua makes this stand of faith and commitment to God. A few verses later, the people reply, *"We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice" (24:24).*

One would naturally assume that this laid the foundation for an incredible future of blessing and peace. Sadly, one would be wrong. **(Judges 2:8-15)**. What Happened? They went from mountaintop of victory and favor into a tailspin of faithlessness that spiraled out of control for 325 years!

We will take a closer look at what went wrong for Israel, but at the outset, I want you to be impressed with HOW QUICKLY such demise took place: **Judges 2:10** – 1 Generation. A faithful people died and their kids grew up and started families, and God was all but forgotten, replaced, disregarded.

One generation of young people can grow to greater faith and service than any before them, as Joshua and his peers did. But it only takes one generation of failure to lose it all.

And so, I look at this good audience today. I see well over 100 young people representing the generation is quickly coming into power and influences and I simply think: WE NEED A GENERATION.

We need a generation better than what we find in this sad chapter from Israel's history.

We need a generation of young people who will be better than their parents, their grandparents.

A generation who make every Christian around them better, Christians of all ages.

A generation that can carry the torch of faith in communities like this one.

A generation who will be the strength of local churches like ours in the very near future, if not today.

A generation my 2 month old can grow up to respect and become faithful under.

Young people, in short: WE NEED YOU. Now more than ever. And not to put undue pressure on you, but perhaps we can call it "due pressure." You matter. You matter more than you can imagine. And this is not a burden, for the Lord will help you. But it is your responsibility. And it starts today.

But what will this generation look like? Will it happen naturally because our young people go to church?

I suggest there are 4 Qualities that must define the coming generation, starting in their youth.

And these 4 Qualities are clearly seen by looking at what failed Israel and doing the Exact Opposite!

I. We Need a Generation of REFLECTION

- a. It seems the next generation was "destroyed for a lack of knowledge." They were prosperous, busy, occupied, and did not reflect upon or learn who God is and what God has done through history.
- b. **Joshua 24:14-18** – What if they had read this? Daily. Constantly. Every Sabbath. This is the Truth about God revealed in history and setting the stage to know Him in the future.
- c. While we might be quick to blame this on the parents for not sharing the stories of God with their children, it was still ultimately the children's responsibility to find that Truth, as young men like Josiah did, since they are the ones who will inherit the duty to serve God.
- d. And so, to our young people: we need a generation of reflection. People who want to know what God has done. People who want to know the stories, the actions of God, the nature of God, the way He responds to righteousness and unrighteousness.
- e. Oh that our young people would not put all the pressure on parents to teach them, or blame our culture for pulling them, but that they would hear Jeremiah's words:
- f. *"Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and you will find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16).*
- g. Be someone who is reading, studying, wanting to learn about the Creator, His greatness and His way. You can't keep your faith on ice and then thaw it out when you are 35 and raise godly kids and lead a local church: starting now, we need a generation of reflection.

II. We Need a Generation of SEPARATION

- a. **Joshua 24:18** – God created a separation between His people and the godless around them.
 - i. They built a culture with God, dependent on God, and not pulled away by others.
- b. **Judges 1:1, 29-33; 2:1-3** – They got soft. They let the worldly in. They invited into their company, their culture, lives, and families the very people who would draw them from God.
- c. And the wisdom of God proved true again: *“Do not be deceived: bad company corrupts good morals;”* for in **Judges 2:13**, they began to behave just like the world around them.
- d. We need a generation of young people who will reflect on God, see the lines He draws between people, righteous and unrighteous, choose the right side, and be separate!
- e. Young people who start now saying NO to friendships and influences that disrespect God.
- f. **II Corinthians 6:14-18** – Do you want to be children of God? Now as your faith grows, and later when your influence will affect countless Christians: *“come out from their midst and be separate.”*
- g. Max, Ben and I often discuss the power of association. People and families who are led away quickly from God because of the friends they chose, the people they dated or fell in love with.
- h. We need a generation of separation, who will hold away from your heart people who will take your heart away from God. Make the stand. And stand together. So that, when my kids grow up under your leadership, you will be the holy family they need.

III. We Need a Generation of RESTORATION

- a. At no point in Israel’s history or in your future are we talking about a generation of perfection. They made mistakes and so will you. But restoration is a quality of heart that admits error, turns from it, and makes things right because it is the right thing to do.
- b. **Judges 2:11** – They sinned. They weren’t reflecting nor separating and they returned to idolatry. It was a mistake and we all make them. But, what next?
- c. **Judges 2:13-14** – They failed or refused to Restore Themselves to God! They forced God to punish them and restore them through suffering!
- d. Do you remember the S Cycles of Judges: Sin, Suffer, Sorry, Saved. Over and over again, they would not restore themselves to God.
- e. We need a generation who can skip the 2nd step!!! You will falter, fall, fail. But what next?
- f. Will you wait until God is forced to punish you, to bring you low, to the demise of others around you, family, church, these little ones? Or, can you repent and restore your efforts?
- g. **Proverbs 28:13** – I want my little ones to grow up influenced by adults, servants, leaders who have a restoration spirit. Who confess wrong and try to make it right!
- h. But that starts with humility and admission of wrong and the will to change... right now.

IV. We Need a Generation of DEDICATION

- a. I’m talking about right here and right now and until your last breathe: ALL IN!
- b. **Joshua 24:19-24** – What a great response. “We are all in and will serve God fully.” And that generation did so. But after them, all their work was undone by a generation who was in, but not so much as to REFLECT, SEPARATE and be RESTORED, and the rest is history.
- c. We need a generation who is ALL IN. Who is all about God, and His people, and who at whatever age you are, will embrace the responsibility to be the present and future of the church of Christ.
- d. **Revelation 3:15-22** – Say “No” to mediocrity in faith. Say “yes” to buying all that God has to offer. Say “yes” to living for His treasures, dressed in His holiness, with eyes opened to your calling. Say “yes” to zeal and penitence and that your hand will always open the door and dine with Jesus.
- e. Lukewarm doesn’t fail because it is evil. It fails because it is affected by evil and cannot stand.
- f. We need a generation who is ALL IN. Say it with me by faith in Jesus and with full focus on how important you are in His name: “ALL IN.”

Limitless. The amount of good in this culture, this community, local churches and families, that can be done by a generation who Learns of God’s deeds, stands apart as God’s children, returns to God each time they fall, and is ALL IN dedicated to His cause until their dying breathe. Oh the good that will be done in the kingdom.

We aren’t waiting for that great generation of faith to be born, to arrive, to eventually bring hope and promise. You are already here. You are right here in these seats today. The future is yours in Jesus’ name. Are you ready to be what God wants you to be, what God’s people need you to be. This starts today.