

G P S

For Grandparents, Parents and Seniors

By Rick Shrader

A Generation of Seniors

Thank you for reading *Aletheia*. I am beginning the year with a new format, building on *Senior Saints and Sensibility* from last year. Ministering to the current generation of older saints is a necessary and biblical mandate. It is also biblical for the current generation of seniors to minister to their world in various ways including family, church, and evangelism.

We have too readily accepted the generational categories (sometimes called “cohorts”) such as baby boomers, gen-xers, millennials, gen-zers, and now gen-alphas. There are a number of organizations, such as the CGK (Center for Generational Kinetics), that lecture and instruct groups and companies on how to best advertise or cater to these “generations.” These categories place a person in a particular “cohort” permanently because of one’s birth date. In this view, you are never anything else and you are always assigned the characteristics of your generation. The most common use of these categories is the determination of age which, I confess, I use frequently (I’m a baby boomer, my kids are millennials, and my grandkids are gen-zers—generally).

The Scriptures don’t categorize individuals in such a way. The Bible talks of age, of course, but individuals move through life from one age or generation to another. Children are children regardless of when they are born, and seniors are seniors regardless of when they grew older. In spiritual perspective, the Scripture sees only two kinds of people, lost and saved, and basically assigns spiritual characteristics to each. By God’s grace any individual can change from lost to saved but will never move the other way. When the Bible speaks of the saved, i.e., God’s children, there are responsibilities as one grows. Children are to come

to faith, to obey their parents in the Lord, to grow in wisdom and understanding, to choose a life’s mate carefully, to serve God faithfully, and then to minister these truths to the younger generation because of the experience one has gained. In this way we all experience every “generation” of life and have unique responsibilities at each stage.

I may call myself a baby boomer, sometimes acquiescing to the culture, yet I have experienced every age of life, from birth to my 70s, and am now a “senior” and also a “grandparent.” Regardless of the year in which I now live, I have biblical responsibilities that every Christian senior has had in every age. If you are a teenager, you have biblical responsibilities that every teenager has had in every age. Cultures have changed but the Bible has not, and God is asking the same thing of us that He has asked of every believer: righteousness, obedience, faithfulness, brotherly kindness and love, compassion, and service.

Since I am a senior, a parent, and a grandparent, I am searching the Scriptures for those mandates incumbent upon me at this time in my life. I find I have many responsibilities. Some of these come easily and naturally at this time, and some of these are difficult and exhausting. I face new challenges that I could not know at any other age (perspective, bodily aches and pains, nearness of death). God also asks things of me that I could have known earlier (spirituality, maturity, wisdom) but that I must know now if I am going to be faithful.

I hope that as this year progresses I can grow as a senior and encourage other seniors to do the same. That will be the thrust of this paper from my perspective. I trust that is your desire as well.

Book Review

Grandparenting, by Josh Mulvihill.

If you want a good place to start reading about your biblical responsibilities as a grandparent, I would recommend this book. Mulvihill wrote his PhD dissertation on grandparenting for Southern Baptist Seminary and turned that into his first book titled *Biblical Grandparenting* in 2018. That was a more detailed book that read like a dissertation but very profitable if you like to dig more. He then wrote a more readable version titled *Grandparenting* also in 2018 which still has the basic material and conclusions of his first volume. He writes, “Your grandchildren know what is most important to you and recognize if something other than Christ is the object of your greatest affections. The best thing you can do as a grandparent to pass on faith to future generations is love God with all your heart.” (Both editions are printed by Bethany House)

“GPS” Groups

I am ready to start a new fellowship of grandparents and seniors at our church. A good name for that group will be the same as this paper, “GPS” which stands for “Grandparents, Parents, and Seniors.” The name gives it a sense of purpose and direction. Our churches have done monthly meetings for senior saints for a long time with good success (called “Jolly Sixties” and various names). However, our society and culture have progressed to the point where we need to update and be more specific in our purpose. We need to learn how to communicate more effectively with our children and grandchildren and to minister in our local church as seniors. We must continue to pray as parents and to give wise counsel to our kids and grandkids. There are dozens of topics that need to be addressed to help us be wise seniors. We’re looking forward to putting feet to our thoughts and seeing what God will do.

Statistics

A 2019 Barna report, “*Who is Responsible for Children’s Faith Formation?*” shows that “spiritual for-

mation begins in the home and continues in the church,” though the influence of schools is usually negative. 99% of pastors rank parents with the most influence, followed by the church (96%), followed by the Christian community at large (70%). It also shows that many parents are at a loss in communicating with the current generation of children—a great need for grandparents and parents to address. (Barna.com site accessed 1/9/22)

Lessons on Prayer

A.W. Tozer wrote of “Three Ways to Get What We Want.” One is to work for it, another is to pray for it, and a third is to work and pray for it. 1) Some things come by “the simple expedient of work.” “God will not contribute to our delinquency by supplying us with gifts which we could get for ourselves but have done nothing to obtain.” 2) Other things are out of our ability to obtain but are “altogether within God’s gracious will for us.” Prayer is the immediate thing for us to do. 3) “But there is a third category consisting of desired objects that work alone can never secure. . . This adds up to work and prayer, and it will probably be found that the greatest majority of desired objects and objectives fall within this category. And this situation brings us close to God and makes us His co-laborers.” (in *Prayer: collected insights from A.W. Tozer*, compiled by W.L. Weaver. This is an excerpt from Tozer’s book, *The Next Chapter After the Last*.)

Ideas

In a book, *Long-Distance Grandparenting*, by Wayne Rice, I read of a man who had a burden to pray every day for his seven grandchildren. This man sent a Christmas present request to all seven grandchildren and their parents (spread out from Atlanta to Vancouver). The request was for each grandchild to send grandpa a coffee mug with his or her picture on it. He included a web-site for making the mug. When he received the seven mugs for Christmas, he named each day of the week after a grandchild’s name and used that cup on that day of the week to drink his morning coffee. He would pray for that grandchild on that day. Necessity is the mother of invention!