

G P S

For Grandparents, Parents and Seniors

By Rick Shrader

A Generational Ministry

As we approach the month of March, 2022, we are watching the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army. It was a hundred years ago when Ukraine was being persecuted and starved by Joseph Stalin and the USSR. That persecution would last for another half century until, by God's judgment and the resolve of strong leadership, the USSR dissolved and Ukraine was again free. My father-in-law, Peter Slobodian, was born and lived in Ukraine during those days before WWII. His family had to flee to South America and it was there that they found the Lord. There he married Mary whose family had fled from Belarus. They met at a Russian/Ukrainian Bible Institute in Argentina, were married, and were blessed with two children there, Ann (now my wife) and Sam. They came to the US and were blessed with a third child, Debbie. Peter, along with Sam, began preaching over short-wave radio to their people under the Soviet Union. It was partly because of faithful men of God of that generation that Ukraine, Russia, and other nations were opened to the gospel. Most of those men are now with the Lord and their works follow them.

As I write, though the future of Ukraine and all other countries is unknown but to God, it is the grandfathers' grandchildren and great-grandchildren who will minister to their own generation in their own countries. My generation of baby-boomers stands in between, with one foot in an older, more moral and civil world, and the other foot in a newer, more immoral and immodest world. We will soon be gone and their generation will be left holding the reins of ministry for years to come. Their job is no more difficult than their godly ancestors, but it is a God-appointed job for them and their children.

There are a number of reasons why their spiritual war will not be easy. The first is that we are seeing a dramatic shortage of Christian workers. As the world becomes more populous, the churches, schools, and mission agencies are turning out fewer and fewer God-called ministers. This isn't their fault, it is ours. I was in Bible college and seminary in the day of large churches and college attendance. Now, fifty years later, my generation has enjoyed the success but has failed to challenge the next generation for service.

Secondly, the churches seem to be less serious about Christian dedication and holiness, and therefore less serious about God's call to ministry. Don't get me wrong, many local churches, large or small, continue to serve and worship God. However, there is a generation coming (that proverbial third generation, Judges 2:7-10) that has not seen or experienced the power of God in individual lives. This is the generation to which they will minister, into which their children will marry, and on whom their churches will exist.

Thirdly, the growing apostasy in the world and the drawing near of the end of the age, will make the ministry much harder. Satan knows his time is short and his ministers will work overtime to deceive and corrupt both the people of God and the people of the world. The blessed hope of the rapture is our privilege and blessing, but it also brings the darkest times the church has ever known, setting up the tribulation period, a time of trouble, the likes of which the world has never seen (Matt. 24:21).

At a time like this we are reminded that God is still in control. His purposes will continue into eternity. It is our job to be faithful and hear His "well-done."

Book Review

You Never Stop Being a Parent, Jim Newheiser & Elyse Fitzpatrick

I found this 2010 book by Jim Newheiser (Fitzpatrick only has minimal contribution) helpful and interesting when considering today's problem of adult children who never leave home, or parents who never let go of their adult children. The "empty nest" can be torture to controlling parents and Newheiser advises a "passport" system. "We gain passport with our adult children by treating him or her with love and respect. . . We lose passport when we nag, manipulate, and demand control." Most of the book deals with adult children who cannot or do not leave home. Several areas of advice are given including finances, sharing the work, dealing with grandchildren, and having a time-frame. One chapter deals with the common term "twixters," children who postpone adulthood into their thirties. They are variously called, "kidults," or (Newheiser's term) "adulthoodescence." In Britain they are called "kippers—Kids In Parents' Pockets Eroding Retirement Savings." In Australia they are called "boomerang kids—you throw them out and they keep coming back." There are numerous reasons why this time happens, some good and most not so good. In the end I found this book an unusual look at today's real problems.

"GPS" Groups

We started a GPS group at our church in February. This was simply an introduction meeting to explain how it works. I brought a biblical message on the responsibilities of grandparents. We had testimonies from two people, a handout on the phases of parenting, and memory verse assignments. We gathered concerns (more informally than planned) with which we want to deal in the future: unwanted divorce in children's marriages, helping children through the "wandering years," when children won't or can't leave home, and older age ministry in the local church. Trying to reformulate a seniors' ministry into an active group of parents and grandparents is on-the-job training! I'm learning as I go, but the process of working with godly grandparents, parents, and seniors is a huge blessing.

Statistics

Pew Research says, "The number of U.S. adults cohabiting with a partner is on the rise. In addition to the half of U.S. adults who were married, 7% were cohabiting in 2016. The number of Americans living with an unmarried partner reached about 18 million in 2016, up 29% since 2007. Roughly half of cohabiters are younger than 35 – but cohabitation is rising most quickly among Americans ages 50 and older.

"Large majorities of Generation Zers, Millennials, Generation Xers and Baby Boomers say couples living together without being married doesn't make a difference for our society, according to a 2019 Pew Research Center report. While 54% of those in the Silent Generation say cohabitation doesn't make a difference in society, about four-in-ten (41%) say it is a bad thing, compared with much smaller shares among younger generations."

<https://www.pewresearch.org>. 8-facts-about-love-and-marriage (accessed 2/23/22).

Lessons on Prayer

Does God really hear my prayer as I simply think silently, talking to Him? Of course. "Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard" (1 Sam 1:13). God rewarded her with a son, Samuel, the great man of God. God knows the number of hairs on every person's head (Matt 10:30) and He also knows every person's thoughts (Amos 4:13). My small, quiet prayers make a huge difference in the world. I'm praying for open doors to Shepherd's Camp ministry in Ontario this summer, so God may have sent thousands of truckers to Ottawa to convince the government to open the borders! Who knows?

Legacy (in Patrick Henry's will)

"I have now disposed of all my property to my family: there is one thing more I wish I could give them, and that is, the Christian religion. If they had that and I had not given them one shilling, they would be rich; and if they had not that, and I had given them all the world, they would be poor."