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There Arose Another Generation; Judges 2:6-10

GPBC

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Introduction – V10 is one of the more startling verses of Scripture. In just one generation the faith disappeared. Not only did this rising generation in Judges not know the Lord, they didn't even have the stories. They lost the faith and they lost the history of the faith. In other words, Joshua's generation conquered and settled the Promised Land by the faith. God moved mountains to get His people to the Promised Land. Because they trusted in God and followed God, they enjoyed success and prosperity and ease of life. And then there arose a generation after them who did not know the Lord – they even lost the miracle accounts. It can happen in one generation – in one lifetime.

For today's message I'm not going to exegete, or explain, the text, but rather I want us to see today's text as a dire warning and take heed and pursue whatever we need to pursue and do whatever we need to do so that behind us there will not arise a generation that does not know the Lord.

I'm sharing my heart with you today – an increasing burden I've carried for some time. I've shared my heart with our staff and with our deacons, and today I share it with you.

30-40 years ago we could make some assumptions of our culture. Due to the remnant of Judeo-Christian morals, we could assume that even unbelievers and non-church attenders around us held to basically the same moral beliefs. We could assume that parents who did not attend church at least wanted their children to be exposed to church. We could assume that even though nonbelievers may not agree with us, they held a shade of respect for our views because those same views were found somewhere in their family heritage. We can't make those assumptions anymore.

Study after study and survey after survey demonstrate that over the past few decades we have moved from being a Christian nation to a post-Christian nation. That correlates directly with decreasing numbers of salvation and church attendance. Knowledge of basic biblical truth has drastically declined. Each new generation indicates a remarkable decline in church attendance, professions of

faith, biblical knowledge coupled with a growing hostility toward the church and biblical truth, but yet with a growing interest in spirituality. Generation X, Millennials, Gen Z, to Gen Alpha.

In other words, the rising generations live in a completely different culture than those of us who are older experienced. Everywhere they turn, 24/7/365, they are inundated with voices and standards and ideologies that are opposed to gospel truth, with no voices speaking gospel truth into their lives, and it is having a tremendous impact and effect. You can't jump in the ocean and not get wet, and you can't be surrounded by darkness without losing light. As we become influenced by the world's view rather than God's view, our system of morals and ethics begin to change, and once that takes hold our allegiance to Scripture begins to wane, then the church, and eventually our view of God and salvation.

In my lifetime, in one generation, I have observed this growing trend. And I have observed in my lifetime the increasing influence of the world and the decreasing influence of the church, gospel, and Scripture in the rising generations. What will come after us church? Will it be Judges 2 – there arose a generation that did not know the Lord. Or will it be Acts 2 – and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved! In December I'll turn the Big 50! I want to give every bit of energy and time I have left to seeing the next generation in love with Jesus, and I'm asking you Grassy Pond to join me!

- I. The Gospel Never Changes But It's Context Does
  - a. The gospel will always be the same gospel and the message of the truth, the Bible, will always be the same truth. It never changes. Jesus will always be the only Savior – John 14. And the truth of Scripture will always be the only truth that sets people free – John 17. The gospel never changes, but it's context does.
  - b. Ill. The first time I went to Kenya I lived for 2 weeks in the home of the pastor. Pastor John and I hold to the same gospel and the same truth because no matter where you go, the gospel and the truth stay the same. But let me tell you – the context for the gospel in Kenya is different than the context I was used to. ex. The only white man in the village – Mzungu. Ex.dancing.
  - c. The gospel never changes, but it's context does. Our cultural context today is not the same as it was 40,30,20, even 10 years ago. We live

in a different cultural context. Right is wrong. Technology advances in hyper speed. Information is constant and instant.

## II. As The Context Changes, So Must Gospel Ministry

- a. We can't reach this present generation with the gospel if we are using ministry methods for previous generations. The same gospel must be re-packaged for it's current context.
  - i. 20 years ago if you were sharing the gospel with an unbeliever, you could start with a simple gospel presentation, and most of the time that person understood what you meant. But now we find people with no biblical knowledge, no family members who are growing believers, and in order to get to the gospel, you may have to start with creation. You may have to develop a relationship/friendship, practice hospitality. Same gospel. Different package.
- b. There's nothing biblically wrong with previous methods of gospel ministry. Many of them have been greatly affective in their day, in their context. But as the present context changes, previous methods may just be out-of-date, they may have just run their course. And if they are out-of-date, they soon become out-of-touch. Ex. Doing the same things today and expecting yesterday's results.
  - i. III. Landline phones and smart phones.
  - ii. III. KJV and modern translations.
  - iii. III. Cashless, checkless society. Next generation of givers.
- c. Worship as well. How we look, how we sound, what we do – if younger generations think our church reminds them of their grandparents church then our church won't be the church for them.

## III. Ministry Changes Require Mindset Changes

- a. Rather than asking when will we get back to doing things like we used to do them, let's start asking what are some new ways, modern tools, fresh ideas that connect with this generation and will carry our church into future decades of ministry? Stop looking back and start looking forward. Rather than staying the way we used to do, we need to ask what we need to do.
- b. Rather than emphasizing what I like or what I prefer, let's adopt the mindset of whatever it takes to win and disciple the next generation.

- i. III. Over the past 40 years church music has gone through at least 4 phases. Hymns – praise and worship choruses – contemporary songs – modern worship song.
  - c. Rather than saying that's the way we've always done it, let's start saying what would be the best and most effective way to do it. The goal of Grassy Pond is not to do whatever it takes to stay the same – but rather to do whatever it takes to win souls and make disciples.
- IV. Practical Changes for the Next Generation
  - a. Pursue a truly blended service. I'm not saying that we stop doing everything we currently do. I'm not saying we quit singing hymns. What I am saying is that we need to make sure our worship services are connecting with every generation. That means we need some changes.
  - b. Take a look at all of our programs, ministries, and activities and work towards streamlining ministry. We can't do everything we've always done because we wear out our volunteers, ministry is less than excellent, pushing through. Our purpose is not to stay busy but rather be effective. We need to do fewer things better. Worship. Evangelism. Missions. Discipleship. Fellowship. How can we most effectively accomplish those things – rather than trying to keep doing what we've always done.

Conclusion – churches grow and move into future decades by winning to Christ and discipling students, singles, and young families. Oh we minister to and seek to reach everyone of every age, but if we are not reaching the rising generations, the church will not survive. It will plateau and then decline and eventually the Wednesday night crowd will be the Sunday morning crowd.

But we can do more than survive; we can thrive. If we understand our current context and shape our ministry to meet this generation, if we will have a burden and vision to do whatever it takes, if we will wrap gospel ministry in a package that connects with them, we will see a generation arise that does know the Lord and all of His greatness and grace! Grassy Pond has been a strong church for 163 years. May we strive to put in place now the kind of ministry that will last for 163 more years of fruitful ministry.