

## Reaching the Next Generation

*Evangelism 101*

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All right, our Treble Makers are gonna make their....that's it, that's right, own it, brother. Our Treble Makers are going to make their way. They're going to continue to practice tonight and as they're making their way out, number 1, I think we enjoy obviously them singing with and for us but let me share with you another reason why this group has a special piece of my heart. This is first through third grade. When I was in second grade, I was in one of these choirs and it was actually during a choir rehearsal at church on a Sunday night singing in a group just like this that I realized my need for Jesus as my Savior. I am actually, I cannot carry a tune, I am not musical, but the Lord used children's music in a church to lead me to himself. And so those of you that are parents out there, I know that we jack them up on sugar and then send them back home with you, but please understand there is a very specific spiritual impact that's happening in their lives more and beyond even just singing songs.

Tonight, we are going to officially conclude our study of evangelism, our study of sharing the gospel, the message of Jesus Christ to those who are outside of the faith, and tonight I specifically requested a little bit more time during the hour because we're going to be a little bit extensive and a little bit exhaustive tonight in our study, this "conclusion," and I'm going to go ahead and give you notice in advance, we're going to be in the gospel of Matthew 1 this evening, but before we go there, allow me to pray for our time together.

*Heavenly Father, we are grateful tonight for the testimony through song not only of us corporately but of our children in specific, that Jesus Christ, you are a living hope. And Lord, we speak of that all the time and we talk of it but, Lord, help us resonate today within you and your heart that you're not just the living hope for us but you're the living hope for the whole world. May tonight, may you use your word, a passage that at times seems so obscure but tonight may it be so powerful. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

Tonight, I'm going to encourage you to turn to Matthew 1 in your Bibles and as we deal with the concept or the idea of sharing the message of Jesus Christ to a lost a dying world, tonight we deal with a concept that you expect us to deal with but maybe in a way that's a little bit different. How do you and I reach the next generation? We're not the first ones to ask this question. In fact, there's an old adage about Christianity, that we're

simply one generation away from becoming extinct. If you and I do not share the hope of Jesus Christ, the salvation that only comes through him to those generations that are coming in behind us, then it will not continue as it has in days past. Tonight, we're going to be in Matthew 1:17 which seems like a completely non-evangelism passage, in fact, it's one of those verses in the Bible that you look at and it somewhat causes you to just kind of twist your head a little bit and say, "I don't even understand why that's necessary to be in there." But we know that all scripture is inspired by God, including this verse, and it is so relevant to our understanding of sharing the gospel and for our promotion and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Here in Matthew 1, we have the lineage of Jesus Christ and I'll just go ahead and confess on behalf of all of us, anytime we begin a Bible reading plan that starts in the New Testament, we tend to just skim over this chapter and go right to chapter 2. Why? Because we want to get to the Christmas story. There are a bunch of names that we can't pronounce, a bunch of names that we've never heard of, and it just is "So-and-so begat So-and-so that begat So-and-so." That's great, that's fine, but what we discover in Matthew 1 is that the entirety of the history of the Jewish people from Abraham all the way to the time of Christ is given in one chapter and in verse 17 we read this verse, it says,

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

It's a very succinct verse that has more substance to it than maybe we've given it credit over time. I want to begin tonight with some definitions and then we're going to talk about how this plays out not just in biblical days but ours as well.

Three words I want to define for you. The first one is time. When we speak about the time of our life or what time in our life or what time is it in life, what we are stating is that we have an observation of that which is linear. What I mean by that is you cannot get time back. Time continues to go forward whether we like it or not. There's an old adage that we should enjoy what we're experiencing now because it is called a present because it is the present tense. You cannot fast-forward until tomorrow and you cannot get back yesterday.

When we speak about the time that we're living in, understand that is absolutely positively a present tense observation but then there's history and I want to camp out here for just a moment because history is that which is cyclical, and what I mean by that is history has a tendency to repeat itself. There's some very famous statements that have been attributed to probably everybody but the original source regarding this. Some of those statements are such as this, that the one thing that men do not learn from history is to learn from it, and that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. One of the great dangers that humanity faces is when we begin to eradicate and/or erase history because it leaves us open to repeating the same mistakes. History more often than

not is an ugly reality but it is there for our learning, it is there for us to say, "We don't want to go there." Do you understand that's why the Old Testament is so important for you? Because in the Old Testament the Jewish people continued to rebel against God and to face the consequences. We need their history to show us where we need not go and to guide us where we need to go.

So tonight, we're going to spend a lot of time talking about history because the fact that it is cyclical and humanity continues to repeat the same mistakes over and over and walk down the same paths. But here in this passage we read, it says from Abraham to David, from David to the carrying away, from the carrying away unto Christ are 14 generations. The word "generation" in your Bible is unique because it can mean both time and history. Allow me to illustrate. Jesus used it both ways. He used it to speak chronologically and the fact of the observation of the times.

Matthew 24, it's one of the most eschatological, which is a fancy word for Second Coming passages in all of the Bible. Jesus there on the Mount of Olives, he's talking about the temple being destroyed, he's talking about the Second Coming aspects, he's talking about the Antichrist, you know, all these horrific events and there in verse 34 he gives an illustration, he gives a parable of the fig tree. He says when the fig tree begins to bud again, and by the way, it's not for tonight's lesson but understand that more often than not the fig tree in the Old Testament was Israel, he said when you begin to see it bud again, it is the last generation. Here's what Jesus was saying, he was saying that when these events begin to happen, you can start the stopwatch. The clock is ticking. He used that word to describe chronology, a timeframe that which can be observed in the here and the now. Back in Matthew 12, he used the word "generation" more in a historical sense, more of a philosophical sense of a way of thinking.

So when we speak about there was a certain generation, sometimes we speak about a generation as far as chronology is concerned, that's my parents' generation, my grandparents' generation, but the Bible also speaks of generation as a way of thinking, kind of this historical cyclical approach. Matthew 12, Jesus has garnered again a very large audience and they are listening to him teach and preach, and while he's doing so, those that are opposed to him, they come to him and they say, "Okay, Jesus, this is great." By the way, I'm interjecting the past stories here. "We've seen you walk on water. We've seen you multiply the food. We've seen you heal withered hands. That's wonderful, but we want a sign from you. We want something that only God can pull off." It's interesting there in Matthew 12, Jesus says, "Okay, you want a sign? I'll give you a sign, only one of them." He compares himself to Jonah. He says, "As Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so the Son of man," speaking of himself, "will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." Here's basically what Jesus said, "If you want a sign, I mean, if walking on water is not enough, if healing the lame is not enough, I'll give you a sign. I'm going to come back from the dead. There's your sign." What's interesting about that passage is not only did he address the question but he said this statement, "An adulterous generation seeks after a sign."

Now what's interesting about the crowd that had gathered there is there would have been multiple chronological generations. There would have been young adults. There would have been middle aged adults. There would have been senior adults. There could have even been what we might call teenagers or students that were there. And what Jesus was saying when the word "generation" is used in the Bible, sometimes it means a period of time and sometimes it means a way of thinking. I want you to hold onto that thought because tonight I'm going to share with you one of the things that I absolutely love in life. I love when the secular world catches up with the Bible. You know, so often we are told the Bible is archaic, so many times we're told, "Oh, that old ancient book. We have new insightful information today." Well, tonight I'm going to share with you that in recent days and in recent years those that have studied history, those that have studied cultures, those that have studied anthropology and sociology and humanity in general have discovered something the Bible gave us thousands and thousands of years ago, is that cultures, humanity, people groups tend to move in historical cycles.

Notice back in chapter 1 of Matthew in verse 17, it says from Abraham to David were 14 generations, from David to the carrying away were 14 generations, from the carrying away to Christ were 14 generations. What I'm about to share with you in specific is not explicitly written in verse 17 but if we had the time tonight we could go throughout all of the Old Testament and reveal it to you. Here is what humanity today has finally discovered, that not only is verse 17 of Matthew 1 true but that cultures, groups of people no matter where we find ourselves, we tend to move in what those who are a little bit smarter than I have called "turnings." Here's what I mean by turnings, that within a respective culture, and by the way, tonight we're going to speak to ours primarily because it's the one that we live in, that in respective cultures there is this historical cycle that is always in operation.

Allow me to share with you how this works. Any culture, and we'll get to more of this in just a moment, always is initiated or sustained on what we call a turning. What I mean by that is simply this, that there comes a moment, there comes a decision, there comes an event where a group of people have to make a very important decision: do we continue as we are or do we change who we are? Let me just use the most obvious example to our culture tonight: 1775 we were British, by 1776 we were American. There is a turning there. It's called the American Revolution that took place. There is an event that happened that changed or initiated the culture.

Here's what they've discovered, that within every culture there is a four generation cycle that continues in motion to the next turning. In other words, you have this historical event that makes a group of people either fight or flight, then there's this four generation cycle and then we have another event, and it just continues. Here's what they've observed, that within every one of our cultures, by the way, this isn't an American phenomena, those who have written the books, this is every culture, that it always begins with a high, that coming out of that event there's strong institutionalism, there's a patriotism, for lack of better of terms. Individualism is not what's most important, it's about group dynamics. Then that generation gives birth to their children, we call those the awakeners. These are those that begin to forsake the institutions and the security that lies therein because all

they want is personal experience and personal gain. Then there's the unraveling. The unraveling is where that third generation looks at their grandparents and their institutions, they see the distrust, they look at their parents in the awakening, and for lack of better terms, they basically say the sky is falling, there is no hope, there's nothing we can do. Then there's the crisis. It is that fourth "generation" that comes along that the next event will occur, and that group of people, whoever they are, must make a very conscious decision: do they continue as they've been, what they were several generations ago, or do they allow a new direction to be initiated.

Now for the sake of illustration tonight and hopefully it will be somewhat fun, allow me to illustrate for you how this can be observed in your own life in this respective culture. We'll deal more with this in a moment but the respective "turnings" in our culture are what we know as the American Revolution, that's an obvious one, then what we know as the Civil War, and then the Great Depression and World War II. So for our modern history's sake and our own observation, let's go back to that time period post-World War II and we can analyze it through the lens of history but I think it's almost a little bit more fun to go through music.

Think about the music about the '50s and the '60s, "Sunday, Monday, Happy Days. Tuesday, Wednesday, Happy Days." Think about the tv shows. I love it, "Father knows best." Please bring that one back. Great title. "Leave it to Beaver." Think about the tv shows about that time period, think about the music, "Sunday, Monday, Happy days." I mean, when the worst thing we're doing was the twist, I mean, that was it. It was a time of glee, happiness. Everybody was kind of, I hate to use the phrase, singing Kumbayah around the campfire.

But then there came the next generation, the '60s and the early '70s. It was a time of revolt. It was a time for revolution. It was a time where if we didn't like who was in charge, we just eliminate them. That's what we did as a culture. And yet you think about the music of the '60s. There was what we know as the British Invasion where the Rolling Stones made the observation, "I tried and I tried and I tried and I can't get no satisfaction." You know, I think Don McLean probably summed it up best in 1971 when he said, "I drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee was dry." Even the music of that generation talks about that all they wanted was some individual experience. Forget the institutions of the past, just give me what will satisfy me.

Then that produced the third generation, the unravelers. Now I must make a confession, I'm one of those. I'm one of those proud X'ers if you know what the X Generation is. That's my generation. We're the sky is falling generation. All of our music came from Seattle where it rains every day and we called it grunge music, all we talked about was how awful the world was and why should we keep going. That is my generation. That is our approach to life.

The interesting thing is that my children's generation is the crisis generation. According to history, according to what we've observed in the past. We had this great event know as World War II, we had the high, we had the awakening, we had the unraveling. Nobody is

going to argue with that, the real issue and we're going to come to this in just a moment, is this issue of the crisis, but I want to share with you, I want to put kind of a seed there tonight. My generation has had the fortune of experiencing something that no other generation in this culture has ever experienced, we've actually produced two generations chronologically. I've got friends of mine with sophomores in college and two year olds at home. The ability to have children at later stages of life, the healthcare system that we have that keeps us going at the means in which it does, if you look at those successive generations that have come behind us, what is interesting is that the majority of both of those generations had the same parental base when it came to generations.

Now hold that thought and let's go back to Matthew 1:17. It says from Abraham to David were 14, from David to the carrying away were 14, from the carrying away unto Christ were 14 generations. Let me save you some time and some heartache: you can go dig through all of the book of Chronicles tonight and you're not going to solve the issue of chronology because when you go back into the Old Testament you're going to see that each one of these three strata, each one of these timeframes that are given, they're all different chronological spans and it all won't "work" mathematically and the reason is actually very simple, because the word "generation" can mean chronology but it also, as Jesus pointed out, can mean a way of thinking or a historical cycle.

Allow me to illustrate. If you go back in the Old Testament, here's what you will often see. It'll say that a king or a leader, a judge, whomever it was, that they walked in the ways of the Lord. His son walked in the ways of the Lord. His grandson walked in the ways of the Lord. But his great-grandson rebelled against God. You have four chronological generations but you only have two philosophical generations because you had a certain way of thinking that lasted three chronological generations that then changed. In other words, to use our context, imagine that that euphoric high that was post-World War II, imagine if it lasted all the way into the '90s. You would have three generations chronologically all with the same mentality, and that that which is now coming behind us would have and has obviously changed.

So what we see here is the Lord makes it very clear that 14 generations is a very important aspect. There's something significant about that because from Abraham to David was 14, from David to the carrying away was 14, and from the carrying away to Christ were 14 generations. Here's what the historians have discovered as of late. They've discovered that every great culture, every great group of people always initiates with one of those "turnings" that we'll talk about and they always change as well, and here's what they found, that on the "fourth turning" there is a major systematic philosophical change.

Allow me to illustrate not with contemporary history but Matthew 1:17. From Abraham to David were 14 generations. What did God initiate, what did he begin with Abraham? The Jewish people. I like to tease my Jewish friends, "But before Genesis 12 we were all Gentiles. There were no Jews previous to Genesis 12." The Lord calls Abram out of the Ur of Chaldees and what does he do? He says, "I want you to start a new people. I want you to be a new group, a new culture. I want you to be the vessel, the conduit, the mechanism by which the Messiah will come to redeem humanity." And how does he do

it? He says, "I'm going to give you a sign, I'm going to give you a covenant. You're going to cut yourself." It's what we call circumcision. Beginning with Abraham, if you were going to identify with what God was doing, it was through what we know as circumcision. Not only did it take place on the eighth day of a young man's life, and there's a lot of reasons behind that, but even in your Old Testament the Jewish people used this against their enemies. In fact, there's a famous story where they encouraged their enemies to all get circumcised and while they were getting healed, they attacked and won the victory. It is a very painful process for those of great age but not for those in infancy. From Abraham to David, if you wanted to show that you were a part of God's covenant, there was only one way to do it. It kind of makes proving church membership go in a new light nowadays, does it not? How do you know you're really Jewish? Well, there was only one way.

But notice what it says from Abraham to David. What happened in David's life? At the end of his life, what did he want to do that God said you can't do? He wanted to build a temple. He wanted to erect a structure where the permanent place and the Spirit of God would dwell. God said, "This is not for you. This is for your son Solomon." Notice it says from Abraham to David, during that timeframe not only were there 14 generations which, by the way, in the cycle there are going to be four turnings there, but it ends with David, and from David which will be Solomon, what did Solomon do? He build a temple. And yes, circumcision was still critical, still important to the Jewish people but now all of a sudden if you wanted to show your understanding, your loyalty, your faithfulness to the things of God, it wasn't just about "having a procedure done on your body," it was about the festivals and the feasts and coming on Passover and coming to those times where you would allow a sacrifice to be given on your behalf. In fact, that temple was so sacred that all of the events both sacred and secular within the Jewish context surrounded therein.

Notice what it says, from David, in other words, Solomon building the temple, until the carrying away. What did the Babylonians do in 586 when they ravaged the Israelites? They destroyed the temple. They took it down to the ground. That's why the Israelites in captivity and you see this in the book of Daniel and Ezekiel and other places, they're literally lost spiritually because they don't have a temple to worship in. And what happens? When Nehemiah, the cup-bearer, goes to Cyrus and he's got tears in his eyes and a countenance and a disposition that is not good, he says, "I just want to go home. I just want to restore my people's place." When he goes back, he takes with him Ezra and others. What's the first thing they do? They rebuild the temple, a place for the presence of the Lord, the place for the covenant of God, the place where they would surround themselves as who they were as a people.

I want you to notice a thread of thought here. You see, from Abraham to David was circumcision, from David or Solomon unto the carrying away was that first temple, and then there's from the carrying away or when they came back, notice what it says, unto Christ. Remember what happens in Matthew 27? Jesus Christ is there on the cross, he makes his last statement, he breathes his last breath, and what occurs? It says that that veil was torn in two. It says the earth quaked. What happened when that veil was torn in two? It was a declaration that the way unto salvation, the way unto forgiveness of sins no

longer involved bringing two turtledoves on a certain day, it meant a resurrected Jesus absolving and taking the price and the punishment of our sins. You see, no longer would that "temple structure" be critical to the people of God to be in a right relationship with God.

Now we've just done 2,000 years of history in about 12 minutes, but from Abraham to David was circumcision, from David to the carrying away was the first temple, and from the carrying away unto Christ was the second temple. Why is that critical? Because here in verse 17 it says every one of these time spans, every one of these historical events comprised 14 generations. So let's talk about that in relation to our own culture. If you and I are tasked and commissioned to share the gospel to those generations that are coming behind us, then we need to merge the history of Matthew 1:17 with the observation of that which is happening right before our very eyes.

Our culture is very unique in many ways, one of which is this, that historically speaking we're one of the only cultures who consistently rebels against our parents. Now I know we joke about teenagers being rebellious spirits and such, but in many cultures in the world today it is shameful to depart from the ways of your forefathers. In our culture, it's almost a source of pride to rebel against our forefathers. So in other words, every consecutive generation has had a "new way of looking at things," and one of the unique things about our culture is this, remember those "turnings" every four generations before the big event? Unlike some other cultures where the time span may be hundreds of years between events, for us it's oftentimes less than 100 years. In other words, we were initiated as a culture with what we know as the American Revolution. Then there was a high, an awakening, an unraveling, and then the crisis of what we know as the Civil War. Then there was a high, there was an awakening, there was an unraveling, then there was the crisis of the Depression and World War II. Then as we just observed, there was a high, an awakening, an unraveling, and a historical crisis.

Tonight, in light of our study of evangelism, I want to share with you what the history books won't share. I'm not here to disparage those who make their living as historians but I think oftentimes we forget that those who write and those communicating history oftentimes do so with a certain perspective at hand. When we look back on our culture, you look back at the major events that we have "survived," it is no less than miraculous. How do we, just a group of ragtag squirrel hunters hanging out in trees defeat the world's greatest army in that day? How do we lose over 600,000 of our own men fighting a Civil War and yet retain composure? And how do we against the greatest power the world has ever known in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century not only come out victorious but come out, for lack of better terms, a Super Power?

Can I share with you what the history books are not going to share with you? That before that first big event, before that first "turning," there was a spiritual movement on this land. We call it the First Great Awakening. The First Great Awakening actually began in 1720. It started in the middle colonies, it went to the northern colonies, then finally it got down here to the south. For an extensive period of time the gospel of Jesus Christ was being preached in town after town and place after place. So significant is what we know

as the First Great Awakening that the overwhelming majority of what you and I today know as Ivy League schools, that's the smart schools, were not started to create institutions of learning for physics, mathematical sciences and such, do you know why they were started? To be seminaries. That's right. Princeton University started as a seminary. Brown University started as a seminary. Dartmouth started as a seminary. We had so many young men that God was calling into ministry, we had to have a way to educate them. Do you find it ironic today that the places that were started to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ are now the greatest antagonists to the gospels of Jesus Christ? John Harvard, Harvard University, is named after a pastor. Yeah, tell that to the academic world. Institutions that today do nothing but belittle biblical Christianity were actually started for the promotion thereof.

Some of the great leaders of the First Great Awakening became Presidents of these institutions. Why is this critical to our understanding tonight? Because that event known as the Revolution that initiated our culture, it was precipitated by a major movement of God. We call it the First Great Awakening because there was a Second Great Awakening that happened later. But oh, there was the high, the awakening, the unraveling, and again we found ourselves in a very destitute and desperate situation and years prior to what we know as the Civil War, the American culture again had gone wayward and strayed from the things and the person of God. But there was an event that very few have heard of and hopefully you have tonight, known as the Layman's Prayer Revival. There was a man by the name of Lanphier. He was so broken over the country's condition that he left his job in the business world, he went to New York City to be a missionary. That's right, he went to New York City as a missionary. He didn't know exactly what he was doing, he was just a businessman by trade. So here was his strategy. Up on the various places where you can do advertisements, he put a post that advertised there would be a prayer meeting and it would take place from 12 noon to 1 o'clock and the first one was going to be on the third floor of the old Dutch Reformed church. He went on the respective day that the prayer meeting was to initiate. He got there and, surprise, there was nobody else with him. So he just sat and prayed. About 40-45 minutes after he started, there were two other ladies who came to join him. They finished the prayer time with him. They made the decision to return the next day. All they did was take a break from 12 to 1 to pray.

Well, as revival often does, it began to spread and people began to take off work and people began to join them and pretty soon it wasn't just in New York, it was in Boston and it was in Philadelphia, and they began to gather not just by the hundreds but by the thousands. Some of the stories that have coming out of this Layman's Prayer Revival because you only have an hour, you can't just take "prayer requests" or you wouldn't ever pray, you'd do all requests. So people would hand those in charge little notes and such and we have accounts where those that were in leadership would hold up a piece of paper and say, "A young lady gave me this. She said pray for my husband. He needs Jesus." And there would be 12 men that would raise their hand and say, "That one's about me." You see, the Spirit of God was moving so much it wasn't even their wife that communicated but God was touching their hearts. Over a span of 18 months, 1.5 million Americans got saved. Let me put that in our context today. Imagine if the entire

population of the state of Texas got saved in the next year and a half. That would be the equivalent today.

We entered what we know as the Civil War, that's a pretty trying event, is it not? It's a pretty critical event but what the history books won't tell you is that the chaplains crossed lines. I know it was brother against brother, I know it was neighbor against neighbor, but we have accounts of chaplains like Gypsy Smith and E. M. Bounds and others who wore a respective uniform as a chaplain but at night was actually invited to cross the lines to lead a Bible study on the other side. You say how does that happen? It only happens if you've had revival. How does that take place? It only takes place if God has moved in your midst. We live in a world today, we will not even entertain an idea contrary to ours, much less invite it to be a part of us, and yet story after story is told of Confederate chaplains leading Union soldiers to Christ, and Union chaplains leading Confederate soldiers to Christ. You say, "How did we get through that traumatic historical 'turning'?" I'll tell you how: because leading up to it there was a major movement of God.

The next "turning" in our culture is what we know as the Depression and World War II. You say, "Well, what was the awakening there?" We don't have an official title for it. The Global Revival was started in 1904 but that was over in Europe, but I like to call it the Great Tent Revival Movement. If you've ever read Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath," he begins that famous book by the family's journey across the nation and one of the observations they make, now this is during that time period, is that every town, every city, there's a tent that's up and every night somebody is preaching and somebody is singing and people are coming to know Jesus. It was a day in the late teens, in the early '20s of the United States where revivals weren't just a night here, a night there, this church, that church, there were tents that were set up in communities for the purpose of sharing the gospel coast to coast.

One of my favorite little stories and anecdotes I'll share with you tonight actually comes from the First Baptist Church of Waco, Texas. How do you know that you're in revival? Because during a business meeting at the First Baptist Church of Waco, Texas, the following statement was made in regards to the tent that was in town, "At this point, there are no known prostitutes left in the city." That was in the business meeting of a church. Why? Because revival had come. God had moved mightily across the land.

Tom Brokaw called the World War II generation the Greatest Generation. Why were they the Greatest Generation? Because they grew up in a time of revival. They grew up in a time where faith was more important than one's flesh. They had been exposed to the movement of God. Do you see a pattern here? Before every one of those "major historical events," there was a major move of God.

Let me pull this full circle. World War II was the last "turning." We know we had a high, we know we had an awakening, the Hippie Movement of the '60s, we know we had an unraveling and we'll claim that as my generation, but then there's the crisis. You know, I made mention to you that my generation is the only one that's actually producing two consecutive generations, what we call the Millennials and the Z's, and they go by other

names. They really own us up as their parentals. Why is that important? Because if you go and look at the history books, if you go look at the studies, not only are we historically up against that time period where there should be a major crisis but I've got news for you, those two generations that come from my generation are the 14<sup>th</sup> American generaiton.

Now why is this important? Two reasons. 1. What is the crisis? I don't know. You realize that the American Revolution was not seen as significant an event as it was until years later. The Civil War, as dramatic as it was, it was years later where we realized how significant it really was. And the same can be said about the Great Depression. If you want to go tonight and get on the internet as oftentimes we do and go back and search and look for America's "fourth turning," you'll find a lot of options and a lot of opportunities. When what we know as 9/11 occurred, there were a lot of people that said, "That's it! This is the event that's going to kick in the crisis. This is it!" Don't get me wrong, 9/11 changed a lot of things about our world and about our culture but can you say it changed everything? You see, that's the thing about an event, it changes everything. We were British, now we're Americans. We were divided, now we were one country. Do you see how those work? It's not just this area of life that's inconvenient, it's everything.

Well, that came and went. Then there were those that said, "Oh, the economic Great Recession of '08," and by the way, the reason it's called a Great Recession is because those who called it that kept their jobs. You do know the difference, right? A recession is when your neighbor loses their job, a depression is when you lose your job. And so what we know as that major economic recession of '08 and '09 and such, people said, "Oh, this has changed everything. We're changing laws. We're changing how we operate." Don't get me wrong, it changed a whole lot but can we honestly say the whole world and our whole culture operates differently than it did previous? In some respects but not in all.

Then we walked through a global pandemic. I don't know if it's changed everything but it's changed more than anything else I've ever lived through. How many times have you heard somebody say in the last 18 months, "Things will never be the same"? We are now experiencing a reality that we never dreamed of, never thought of, and we don't know how significant it will or will not be until a few years down the road. I do not have the ability today to tell you what that "crisis" will be or has been that initiates that "fourth turning," but I do have the ability to tell you tonight that something is missing compared to the past. There is no revival movement. There is no Great Awakening. There is no movement of God from coast to coast that has laid the foundation for those who will be engaged in the conflict. You see, today you and I are raising a generation of children and grandchildren that not only are less desirous and less exposed to the things of God than our respective generations but they're missing something, they're missing the revival, they're missing the awakening, they're missing all of that stuff that happened in days past.

So let me set the stage when we talk about sharing the gospel to the next generation. Not only do we have fewer people interested in the things of God today than ever in the history of our land, not only that but we are knocking on the door of history's timetable and we're doing so without the benefit of an awakening and/or a major revival movement. It appears that we're doomed. It appears that there's no way out. But can I go back to one

of those original terms? History. You know if you divide that word properly it becomes his story. You see, tonight we have worshiped a God who walks on water, worship a God who brings the sun back in the book of Judges, we worship a God who can raise from the dead. You and I could debate and discuss history and "turnings" literally until we're blue in the face but the reality of the matter is what we need more than anything is a movement of God. We need God to move in this land, in our homes and in our communities. It is the only hope that these coming generations have is the hope of Jesus Christ and we collectively in some capacities have not experienced what those in previous days have.

So tonight when we talk about reaching the next generation, we find ourselves in a very critical juncture. It's historically significant. It's philosophically significant. But more importantly it is spiritually significant. So for our closing tonight, for our response tonight, I want to do things a tad bit differently. I'm going to ask our own John W. to come to the piano just to play softly and I just want us to enter a season of prayer. It's not going to be really elongated, just a brief season of prayer. Feel free to stay where you are, come up front, do whatever you want, and here's what I want you to do: I just want you to pray that God would move. That general. Just pray that God would move because here's the problem: we oftentimes pray God will move but we want him to move the way we pray and rarely does he move the way that we would desire. So if you would join me as we close tonight just in a season and time of prayer. John's going to play quietly and then I'll guide us as we pray.