May 7th Memory Verse: Proverbs 22:6

Pass the Faith Scripture Reading: Psalm145:4,-7

 “Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.” These wise words from George Orwell in his popular novel 1984 starts us thinking about who controls our past and how do we keep the past alive and relevant for today’s generation?

**SLIDE 2**

Let’s talk about that next generation, we are on to the Alpha generation but our confirmands are Gen Z so we going to focus on that group. Just so we are on the same page, Generation Z includes those who are born between 1996 and 2010. They are the generation who come immediately after the Millennials.

**SLIDE 3**

Who are Gen Z? Let’s take a look.

* Largest current generation.
* Digital natives.
* Never felt safe at school.
* Growing up faster than previous generations.
* Can speak entirely in emojis.

Ministry to Generation Z is challenging because of demanding school expectations, sports and extra-curricular schedules, anxiety and depression among adolescents being at an all-time high, broken families, and identity crises to name several things.

**SLIDE 4**

Let’s look at the faith profile of Gen Z.

* 59% self-identify as “some sort of Christian.”
* 18% self-identify as “no faith” or “atheist.”
* 35% believe church is irrelevant and hypocritical.

I believe that ministry to the next generation is critical. We are at a very crucial moment in history, and we’ve been here before. Let’s look at the warning in Judges 2:10.

**SLIDE: WARNING FROM JUDGES**

*10 When that whole generation had passed away, another generation came after them who didn’t know the Lord or the things that he had done for Israel. (Judges 2:10).*

Moses lead the people of Isreal for 40 years in the desert, 40 years instead of going right into the promise land because the people had sinned. Then Joshua takes over and leads the people across the Jordan and into the Promise Land. At the end of His life, he gathers the people the together for one last pep talk: Joshua 24:15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” At that point in Israel’s history, Joshua had stood next to Moses as a great hero, and yet the new generation didn’t recognize who God was or what He had done. So what happened to the nation of Israel? Joshua, Israel's great and faithful leader, died at an old age and was buried. All the people of his generation soon die off, as well. Now the next generation takes over. These children and grandchildren of Joshua's generation are said to "not know" the Lord. In this context, that simply means they didn't acknowledge God's authority. They did not experience firsthand some of the mighty works that the Lord had done for Israel. They did not carry the same commitment to the Lord that Joshua had demonstrated during his years of service. Add to that the temptations of the Canaanites' religious and immoral culture, and the results were disastrous.

**SLIDE: ONE GENERATION AWAY**

It has been said many times before, and I believe it now more than ever, that we are always only one generation away from losing the Christian faith. Hear me clearly: I am not here to bash all of Generation Z, we have three of the faithful here today. I am not here to blame them or their parents or hurt anyone. I would like to look at three interconnected reasons why this may have happened to the Israelites. And as we examine this text and the circumstances that led to them being in this state, we need to make sure we make some applications in our own lives so this does not happen to the next generation of the Lord's people here.

Six in 10 young people (these who are in the church as children) will leave the church permanently or for an extended period starting at age 15, according to new research by the Barna Group. You may know people in which something like this happened. A parent was by all looks of things faithful in serving Christ, but unfortunately their children go in the wrong direction; not knowing the Lord. We need to learn from scripture how these kind of things happen so we don't fall into this trap, with either us or the generation that follows not knowing the Lord. The reasons the faith was not passed on is not explicitly explained in Scripture, but can easily inferred.

The people drifted away from the Word of God. They didn’t deliberately ignored the word, but they obviously drifted from it. It was no longer a priority in their lives.

They did not know the word of God as they should. What did God tell Joshua?

Joshua 1:8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Meditate on the word day and night. How much time do we spend in the word of God? Do we meditate on it continually? Some of this was the fault of the Levi’s who had the word, but they fail to teach it. Families failed to pass it on. They fail to talk to their children about the Word. What did God say to Hosea a few centuries later concerning the His people?

Another reason, the Israelites wanted to be just like everyone else. They were living in a land that had other Gods and worldviews. It is human nature for people to want to blend in with the crowd, to be like everyone else. Even kids, in their desire to be “who they are,” in that they are wanting to be different, just like all their friends. We were not called to be just like everyone else. We are called to be what God wants us to be. This is our calling; We are called to be God’s holy people, to be sanctified and holy. Are we being sanctified? Are we being holy? Are we living a life that is different from the world, or are we just giving it lip service? We fail to pass on the faith because in many cases, we fail to live the faith ourselves.

**SLIDE: PASSING ON THE FAITH…**

Passing on the faith to the next generation is the responsibility of the entire church.

Church, I have a challenge for you: please pass the faith. When Lily was around 7 we went out to a nice supper club and the waitress went through the specials. She told us about the walleye they had. When it was our turn to order, Lily asked if the fish and chips on the kids’ menu was also walleye. Of course, the waitress said no it’s fish sticks. With a disappointed frown she said she’d take a cup of soup. She knew that the good fish was not on her menu. Just like she longed for some of that delicious food that was out of reach on the other menu, there are some incredibly rich spiritual foods on our table here today. Church, pass the faith.

I believe that God is at work now and is still relevant today just like He was when the Scriptures were written thousands of years ago. I believe God still sets people free. I believe that there is hope for a hopeless and confused world. I believe in the promises of God and the truth that is revealed in the Bible. I believe and follow Jesus. And if you are sitting there nodding your head to all those statements

Then we are compelled to share the good news with others. We cannot hold it in; we must tell others. Let’s talk some more about how that faith is passed on to others. What does it mean for us to pass the faith, and how do we do it? I might have just lost a few you. For some reason when we talk about sharing our faith, or that scary word evangelism, we immediately start looking around for the other guy. Let’s look back at scripture reading Psalm 145:4-7.

**SLIDE: Psalm 145:4-7 “One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty— and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They tell of the power of your awesome works— and I will proclaim your great deeds. They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.**

 As was read in our scripture reading today, one generation shall commend God’s work to another, declare His greatness and sing His praises. God is so great that He is THE LEGACY EACH GENERATION LEAVES FOR THE SUCCEEDING GENERATION. God’s greatness is the lifeblood for all generations. In 1717, King Louis XIV of France died. Preferring to be called "Louis the Great," he was the monarch who declared, "I am the State!" His court was the most magnificent in Europe, and his funeral was the most spectacular. In the church where the ceremony was performed, his body lay in a golden coffin. To dramatize his greatness, orders had been given that the cathedral would be very dimly lit with only one special candle that was to be set above the coffin. The thousands of people in attendance waited in silence. Then Bishop Massillon began to speak. Slowly reaching down, he snuffed out the candle and said, "Only God is great." Only He is the lifeblood of the generations. Are we ready to make that same proclamation?

**SLIDE: PASSING ON THE FAITH MEANS WE TALK…**

Passing on the faith means we talk about what God has done in our lives with those who are younger than us. In other words we: commend, declare, and sing the greatness of God. If you have experienced the goodness of God, it is like this goodness is on your table right in front of you. It is not difficult for you to know that it is there, because you can smell it, and you can taste it. Your job and my job is to pass it along. It’s good. Can you smell it? Will you sit down with me, and let me tell you about God’s goodness? God’s goodness is so delicious. Do you want to taste it? This is how the passing on of the faith happens as a concept, but what does a thriving faith community look like here at our church? I’m glad you asked. Let’s talk about that, as well.

Do you remember the generational timeline I showed earlier? We have these generations represented at our church. Our greatest strength in reaching the next generation as a church lies in the diversity of ages found in our church. This fact is our greatest asset. We may get caught up in differences of worship styles and preferences but let me say this clearly: traditional worship and contemporary worship both present an incredible opportunity to reach the next generation. It’s not about worship styles and preferences at all.

We have the faith right here on the table. Take it and pass the faith on to others. The range of ages and experiences is just what our community needs. We welcome all ages and stages. As we continue to grow and live into the potential of being a multigenerational church who cares deeply about sharing the faith with the next generation, what will it look like? What does it look like to have more babies, kids, and youth? Are we comfortable having things broken? Are we good with noise or movement?

Having kids and youth in our church means we must be comfortable with a little bit of chaos. We must extend grace with the crying and mercy when something is broken or not used the way we intended. Are we prepared as a church to do what it takes to continue passing on the faith to the next generation?

Let me give you some practical steps of exactly what it would look like to pass the faith here and now. I am going to give you an opportunity to respond, and I want you to prayerfully take it seriously right now. One of the simplest and most practical ways for you to get involved in passing on the faith to the next generation is to pray for our kids and youth. Each of you can do that. Write the name of a teen or child on the back of your bulletin. They don’t necessarily have to be from this church. But commit to praying for the kiddo for the next week.

The next practical way that you can pass on the faith is to serve. Here’s the great thing about serving: there are a variety of ways to serve, from organizing to greeting, all the way to teaching and mentoring and every level in between. I would love to see half of the adults in this church involved in serving on a regular basis in either our nursery, kids, or youth ministry. What about signing up for the summer mission trip? Even being a greeter or working the coffee shops allows you an opportunity to stop and chat with one of the kids who comes through the door.

I know what some of you may be thinking in regard to serving. You either don’t have the time, don’t have the physical capacity, or don’t like kids. I hear you. One of the simplest ways that you can support our children and youth ministries is to tithe and give an offering. Do you think about our kids when you write your offering check or give online? I would encourage you to do that the next time you give. When you give, you support the ministries of our church, which includes our children and youth ministries.

I believe God has some good news for us today, church, and here it is: God has equipped leaders here in this church for the purpose of passing the faith. Who will respond to the call? I believe there are some gathered here today or who may listen to this message later whom God is calling. I don’t know who those people are, but God does.

**SLIDE 10: GOD HAS EQUIPPED US…**

God has equipped us as a church to pass the faith to others. Each of us have a role to play. What is your role? Prayerfully consider what God would want you to do and how Jesus would want you to follow. You have been hardwired by God for a reason. You have been gifted and equipped by the Holy Spirit for ministry. And Jesus is urging you to follow Him where He would lead you.

**SLIDE: TITLE**

Whatever you do, please pass the faith. Remember: the goodness of God is right in front of you. Don’t hoard it or keep it to yourself. Invite a kid or a youth to experience the goodness of God as you declare God’s goodness to him or her. Pray for them by name. Develop a relationship with their parent and find out how you can help them.

Whatever you do, please pass the faith.

**Benediction:**

May the Holy Spirit empower you now and always to speak and live the Good News of Jesus for you and for all. Amen.

Email: CONFIRMATION SUNDAY:
Generation Z, now more than any other generation, is at a crossroads of faith. Will the church step up and pass on the faith or will this generation continue to slide towards a lack of faith? While we may delegate the passing on of the faith to ministries within the church or to paid staff, the passing on of the faith is the responsibility of the entire faith community.