

SERMON TITLE: Next Gen Sunday
SCRIPTURE: Joshua 4:19-24

DATE: August 15, 2021
PASTOR: Rob Marks

Today is Next Gen Sunday. We set aside one Sunday in August to focus on and celebrate the Next Generation. This is the time of the year when families make the transition back into the routines of school. In the life of the church, this is also the time of year when much of our ministry plan kicks off.

The responsibility of investing in the next generation falls to more than just parents. The value system and emphasis on the next generation is seen throughout the Scriptures. In the Old Testament God is referred to as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (multi-generational). This means that our involvement in the next generation includes all of us.

Here are three ideas to keep in mind when we think about the next generation.

1. The next generation is not hopeless.

This generation is unique and it has different challenges that can sometimes make them seem hard to understand and difficult to relate to but they are not that different from previous generations. Every generation has its own values, words they use, and tastes in clothing, hairstyles and music that the previous generations don't understand. All of these things don't make the next generation lost and hopeless, they make them just like my generation and your generation - unique.

If your generation turned out *not* to be hopeless, even though your parents and grandparents thought you were, then this generation isn't hopeless either. We can't declare the next generation as hopeless and quit on them.

2. Influencing the next generation will take an investment but they are worth it.

We see great examples in the Bible of investment in the next generation. Moses investing in Joshua, Elijah investing in Elisha, even Jesus investing in the disciples. The next generation is worth it because investing in them produces dividends that extend beyond what we can see. The real hope of the world is Jesus and the work of Jesus has not been fully accomplished *currently*, meaning someone will have to take up the mantle once this current generation is gone.

3. The next generation is our responsibility.

It is God's design that the older generations would disciple and instruct the younger generations. In Joshua 4, after being rescued from Egypt and wandering in the desert for 40 years, the Israelites are now about to enter the land that God had promised them with Joshua now leading them after Moses had died. But to do this they must cross the Jordan River. God instructs them to carry the Ark of the Covenant into the river where He miraculously holds back the water so the whole nation of Israel could cross over on dry ground to the other side. You probably quickly realize this is very similar to what God did when He parted the Red Sea so His people could escape Pharaoh and his army. It's just that most of the people who had witnessed that were dead. God tells Joshua to have one man from each tribe take a stone from the middle of the river on his shoulder and carry it to the place they would camp that night.

Joshua sets up these stones as a memorial so that when their children ask about them they can share about the power and goodness of God as He brought them through the Jordan River on dry ground just like He brought them through the Red Sea.

When Joshua says, “when your children ask their fathers in time to come” he is referring to the generations that will follow because he understood that it is the responsibility of the current generation to pass on the instruction and knowledge of God to the next generation. If we are aware that the work of the Gospel must continue long after we’re gone *then* we must also be aware that the work cannot stop with us. We are not the ultimate fulfillment of God’s redemptive purposes in this world. There is still much to do and therefore we must not only look at our roles *in* the work, but also our roles in preparing the next generation *for* the work.

For Discussion:

1. Talk about concerns you have with or things you don’t understand about the next generation.
2. What were some things you remember about your generation that your parents or grandparents didn’t understand?
3. In what ways are you the same or different from the next generation?
4. Who was someone who invested in you when you were growing up?
5. In the Joshua 4:19-24 passage, why was it critical to set up memorial stones?
6. In what ways could you invest in the next generation?