

# Your Role in Discipling the Next Generation

Ministry Training and Equipping Seminar  
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*I once heard Dr. Doug McLachlan say that “The church is always one generation from extinction.” The church will not remain strong and continue to fulfill its mission if it does not effectively pass its beliefs and convictions to the next generation. Therefore, if you love the church and are committed to the Great Commission, you ought to be concerned that we are effectively making disciples of the next generation.*

## I. The Church’s Responsibility to the Next Generation

### A. The perpetuation of the church depends on the transfer of truth and biblical values from one generation to the next (2 Tim 2:2).

1. This verse is particularly concerned with pastors discipling the next generation of pastors, but the underlying principle applies to all believers.
2. We are not merely responsible to keep the next generation in line; rather, we are responsible to see that they embrace the faith in such a way that they are as committed to the next generation as we are to them.

### B. The members of the church are responsible to bring each other to maturity.

1. God has given the church gifted individuals (v. 11).
2. These gifted individuals are responsible to equip the members to minister to each other (v. 12).
3. The members are responsible to bring the church to maturity (v. 13).

“The model Paul presents is...one of mutual service in the community and not one of professionals serving a group of consumers (Arnold, *Ephesians*, p. 262).

### C. Mature believers are responsible to model godly character and to encourage the next generation to follow their example (Titus 2:1–5).

### D. Conclusions

1. The church is to be a place where peers watch out for each other and where mature believers are investing in the less mature.

Dr. Ollila says that every believer should aspire to have a *Barnabas* (i.e., a peer), a *Paul* (i.e., someone to look up to), and a *Timothy* (i.e., someone to disciple).

2. The church is to be a place where children and teens are constantly learning from mature believers and where young adults are constantly learning from those who are older. The church is to be a place of intergenerational discipleship.

### E. Clarification: My point is not to diminish the primary role of parents in discipling their children.

1. Christian parents are responsible for discipling their children (Eph 6:4).
2. The church can provide tremendous assistance to even the best parents by reinforcing the lessons they are teaching.
3. Not every child has spiritually mature Christian parents who can disciple him or her well.

## II. Challenges to Intergenerational Discipleship

- A. Especially in a large church, age groups tend to segregate and to listen to each other to the exclusion of any other group. This segregation results in younger generations reinforcing their immaturities and in older generations being annoyed and frustrated by younger generations.
- B. More mature believers don't seek out younger believers because it is intimidating, uncomfortable, and time consuming or because they don't recognize the need. Younger believers don't seek out more mature believers because they are intimidated or don't appreciate the need.
- C. Clarification: Eliminating Age-based ministries is not necessarily the answer. These ministries provide a context for intergenerational ministry, they provide valuable instruction for special challenges that come with each life-stage, and they encourage peer accountability and leadership development.

### III. Practical Steps to Developing a Culture of Intergenerational Discipleship

- A. Take initiative in building intergenerational relationships.
  - 1. Learn people's names. Learn the name of every child in the church. If you are younger, learn the names of older people in the church.
  - 2. Put yourself in positions to show you care and to build meaningful relationships.
    - a. Serve in a ministry to children and teens.
    - b. Attend fellowship events (e.g., church family picnic, retreats) with the goal of developing relationships with people outside your age range.
    - c. Reach out to people from other generations during the regular services of our church and especially during prayer meetings.
    - d. Attend school events and talk to children and teens about their performance.
- B. Take advantage of the relationships you build.
  - 1. Model godliness for the next generation. The more models they have, the better.
  - 2. Recognize needs and opportunities and attack them.
  - 3. Involve the next generation in your ministry.
  - 4. Ask questions of the older generation.
- C. Encourage your children to develop intergenerational relationships.
  - 1. Keep them active in children and teen ministries.
  - 2. Take them to church events rich in intergenerational contact such as family camp, the picnic, and prayer meetings.
  - 3. Encourage them to serve in roles where they will observe adults and spend time with adults (e.g., VBS, showers, dinners, Summerfest, etc.).