

Making Connections: Closing the Generational Gap in the Church

During the Fourth Quarter of 2015 the First Fruits Newsletter Editor and staff celebrated its 3rd Anniversary as an official record to the witness and work being done at First Baptist Church. Personally, I want to express my gratitude to all the people who have served and supported this very special work in the life of our community. Your unique gifts and unwavering dedication enabled the newsletter ministry to become a welcomed reality. Kudos to all, staff, members, and faithful readers. In the midst of our celebrative conversation, we all spoke passionately about what some have referred to as a crisis. We discussed the unsettling effects of not effectively reaching out to our youth. We painfully acknowledged our church's failure to establish vital connections with the millennial generation in our fellowship and community. To be sure, recent studies indicate that the average parents of millennial teens are woefully out of touch with their children's values and thinking.

There is no denying the reality that the current socio-cultural landscape in America is undergoing radical changes with regards to links, which once connected generations. Simply stated, we are experiencing an unprecedented generational gap. The old boundaries are not longer clear guides for thought and behavior for youth. For example, the modern Information Age has placed all groups and ages "online", so to speak, with little or no respect for background or age appropriateness. It is my strong argument that exposing youth indiscriminately to information/materials that were previously guarded as "adult only" has eroded the moral boundaries and sacred identity in our culture. In many respects, to treat all ages as the same supports the erroneous thinking that we are all just "peers" (without any affirming idea of eldership) on the same moral maturity level. Communities that attempt frame their mission and purposes without the counsel and wisdom of "elders" are doomed for failure. Therefore, it warrants serious consideration that we start now reconstructing Christian fellowships around viable connections between young people and elders.

We can and must learn a different way of being connected—a way that sustains both the old and new wine. Despite the alarming statistics of today's youth violence, or the ambivalence about "Black Lives Matter", First Baptist Church of Brownville, TN shall unapologetically proclaim that all life is precious, especially the young. This message seeks to convey the need for greater awareness about recovering moral balance in our communities by creating brighter paths for others to see. Perhaps our greatest challenge is not knowing how to adjust and change, but rather allowing our love and mutual trust to become the true means of making new connections. I believe people are a wondrous fresh miracles given not to us, but through us—ensuring that each surviving generation receives a life-affirming message that empowers us to escape the narrow trap of "me-ism". Lets celebrate the young people who renew our lives. Stay strong young sisters and brothers, you are loved and needed here.