

Good morning, friends and family. We are going to adventure into a sermon series focused on what it means to be an Intergenerational Community. Back in January, we spent 4 weeks on Community. We learned in week:

1. That our Creator is a powerful and personal God, a God who is with us.
2. That God invites us, His people, into a story full of beauty and goodness.
3. That we find out who we are in the face of Christ and in God's community.
4. How we as God's people are to act and be ourselves, modelled in the life and invitation of Jesus Christ.

We get to pick up where we left off and focus on what it means for God's people to be an Intergenerational Community. For the next 6 weeks you will hear from a number of voices... you'll get me this morning and next week, then we'll hear from Gary week 3, and Bill week 4, from Gary again in week 5, and then Brandon will tie it all up in week 6. You'll also hear from Dave Sears throughout these weeks as he brings nuggets of insight from various sources that help us to wrap our heads around the topic. AND! Dixie will be leading and has some special plans for our S2M during this series. What a treat to have so many voices for this season.

We've been slowly walking through Revelation, pondering with our people what it means for us all to live as God's people in modern day Babylon. But how do we live as God's people? How do we apply the timely truths of Revelation to our lives? How do we navigate through the enemy's crafty schemes and temptations of violence and domination, to grasp onto the lifegiving realities of God, where beauty and goodness are hard won and where suffering is commonplace? This takes wisdom does it not? Well then, how do we acquire the wisdom necessary for flourishing healthy lives that honor God and bring peace and joy to ourselves and our families?

In Revelation, we never read of an isolated Christian, one of God's people in the singular or alone. When Revelation's writer, John, puts pen to papyrus, he depicts Christians in the plural, together, as a community. Though Rome had exiled and

isolated John on Patmos, John endured by recalling his union with Christ's churches as their brother and partner in the tribulation, the kingdom, and the patient endurance that are in Jesus (cf. 1:9). That's because there is no such thing as an individual Christian. We are not saved into a private individual heaven. We are saved into God's family (by grace through faith in Jesus) and we begin living in his family from the moment we become Jesus' disciple. To be a Christian necessarily means that you are part of God's great big family. This is what happens every Sunday, isn't it? We gather as one large family under God, all lifting our faces to meet our Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, worshiping Him and partnering with Him to bring more of heaven to earth. Every Sunday we gather to pursue God together, diving into his communicated word to us. We, his children, sit at the family dinner table [point to communion] of God, eager and interested in what He has to share with us. It's with God and His great big family where we help one another figure out how best to live in this world as His children. Looking around the room, young and middle-aged and old; child, adult, parent, grandparent... we all help each other become wise.

Eugene Peterson does a good job summarizing what wisdom is. Wisdom has to do with becoming skillful in:

- honoring our parents and raising our children,
- handling our money and conducting our sexual lives,
- going to work and exercising leadership,
- using words well and treating friends kindly,
- eating and drinking healthily,
- cultivating emotions within ourselves and attitudes toward others that make for peace

Peterson goes on to highlight that the most important skill of wisdom is to filter all the other wisdom skills we just mentioned through our relationship with God and his Word. Sign me up for that kind of life, right? Peterson's quote gets at what it looks and feels like to live full of joy and peace, the kind of life that shines God's healing light in a dark & broken world. But we're supposed to be talking about Intergenerational Community Tim... why are you talking about wisdom? Thanks for asking! What our elders and leadership have been becoming more and more aware of is this...

BIG IDEA: Wisdom is designed to be passed through generations of faithful followers of Christ.

God has intended for us to partner with Him, to model godly practice character to each other, and to join him in passing down through the generations His blessings to our children and our children's children (more on this next week). If you want to turn and look with me at the *book of Proverbs*. We will be in *chapter 1, verses 1-10*. This first chapter sets up the whole book; why it was written, and who it was written for...

1:1 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel. King Solomon, the son of David, was writing to his son. And why was he writing to his son.

Let's read on in *verse 2: To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight*. Solomon wants his son to know and understand, to experience, to be familiar with and well acquainted with wisdom and discipline.

3 to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity. Solomon wishes for his son to invite instruction, to be teachable. Righteousness, justice and equity are complex aren't they. This sort of maturity does not come naturally; these have to be taught and modelled.

4 to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth. 5 Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, 6 to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. Judgement, discernment, critical thinking and perseverance...these are all signs of maturity. Would you like to have someone help you acquire these life skills?

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. Books and sermon series have been written on this verse alone. Fear, awe, some have used reverence; whatever word you use, the point is the same: the first step in learning anything of eternal value is bowing before God. This is no easy task. Because our spirits are naturally bent out of shape, we instinctively rebel against God and try to take his place. This posture of surrender and acknowledgement has to be modelled and taught.

8 Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, 9 for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck. 10 My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. Listen, my son! How many times have you heard your parents tell you to listen? How many times did you regret not listening to your parents? And for the record, for all to hear...mom, dad, you were right at least 80% of the time. I can say this now, because I've lived enough life to realize that I need as many good sources of loving wisdom in my life as I can get! And by God's blessing, I've got a great mom and dad. I also want to point out, and I'll touch on this more next week, that godly wisdom within God's kingdom and family is multi-directional...meaning that wisdom is given and received from those younger than you, older than you, same age as you, and from different life experiences than you...this is the way God intended for us to humbly interact with each other.

Many of you know that I've spent the last 8 months working as a chaplain at the Veteran Affairs Medical Clinic in downtown Cincinnati. I've had the privilege of listening to our country's veterans who have given much of their blood, sweat, tears, and early years of life to defend our freedoms. Many of our veterans have experienced the horrors of war, have seen their comrades and best friends die, and have had to follow orders that go against every fiber of their being. Many were 18-19 years old, just kids, when they were swept away into combat. I've had grumpy, grizzled, skin like leather, tough as nails veterans share the wisdom they've collected over the years. They've told me stories of failed marriages and estranged family members; of how they've used drugs & alcohol to cope with the trauma & sleepless nights. And all this time, through victories and failures, through celebrations and regrets, I've treasured their stories in my heart and collected a mountain of wisdom.

I'll share one story real quick and then give you a preview of next week. I had the privilege of visiting with an old army veteran. He was wheelchair bound... most of them were in wheelchairs where I worked. He was going blind and couldn't move around without assistance. To him, I was a tall dark blur. One day, as I was making my rounds, I noticed that he was not in his usual spot out in the dining hall next to another resident. My veteran was in his bedroom. The lights were out (What good

were lights to him?), but he had the TV on. I knocked on the metal door and announced who I was and if I could come in. He was facing away from the door, but I could hear him invite me in. I walked beside him, opposite the TV so I could hear his soft voice better. *“How are you today my good friend?”* I asked, looking into his cloudy eyes. A faded blanket covered his body, and he had grippy yellow socks on his feet. He turned his face to his left to meet mine, *“Do you know why I’ve got the TV on?”* He asked. Before I could venture a guess, he told me, *“It’s so I know where I am in the room. I know that my bed is to my left, and the bathroom is over there, and the window is in front of me all because I know where the TV is.”* *“Wow friend, that’s pretty ingenious. You’re a resourceful man.”* *“Chaplain, I’m going blind. I can barely make you out, you’re just a shadow to me. My body is falling apart, and I can’t walk no more. My wife is living in a hotel, almost homeless, almost out on the streets, and I can’t do a single thing about it. I just found out that my best friend died... I haven’t seen him in years. And I’m waiting to find out if I’ve got cancer or not.”*

I am stunned at this point. I check my breathing and calm my emotions down so that I can be present with my friend. I notice that he’s whispering under his breath, I can barely make it out... *“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters...”* His familiar words break me out of my shock. *“Friend, I am sorry to hear all this.”* *“That’s alright chaplain, what can you do about it?”* He calmly responds. *“I hear that you are speaking the Psalms, and what you just told me is a lot. Your body isn’t working, your beautiful wife is having trouble, your best friend just passed away, and we’re waiting to hear what else... How do you begin to handle this kind of news, friend? I can’t imagine how difficult this is.”* *“It’s hard chaplain, it’s hard”*, he matter of factly says. *“Friend, I’d be pretty angry, myself.”* *“What’s there to be angry about?”* This response jolted me. *“Am I sad, yes. Am I in pain and grieving, yes. But angry? I’m not angry.”* *“Tell me more”*, I blurted out in amazement. *“God’s so good to me. I’ve got a roof over my head, food in my belly, clothes to keep me warm. The LORD has ordered my steps, and I’ve lived a good life by his grace. I’m grateful for all he has done for me. What’s there to be angry about? When He’s good and ready, He’ll take*

me home, but until then, I'll sing his praises." And then my friend starts to sing an old gospel hymn: God Is My All and All. This preacher that stands before you here and now just got preached to by an old blind man who can see more of God's kingdom than I've ever dared imagine. This is wisdom, is it not!?

My friend's perspective and peace and worship in possibly the toughest season of his life was astonishing. As he sang his gospel hymn, my soul was rejoicing with him that God is so good. *"Thank you, sir. Thank you for ministering to my soul today"*, I said as my voice cracked a little. *"No problem at all, chaplain. Come back any time."* These moments, their stories are SACRED... God's wisdom is on display when we are vulnerable enough to share our victories and sufferings to one another.

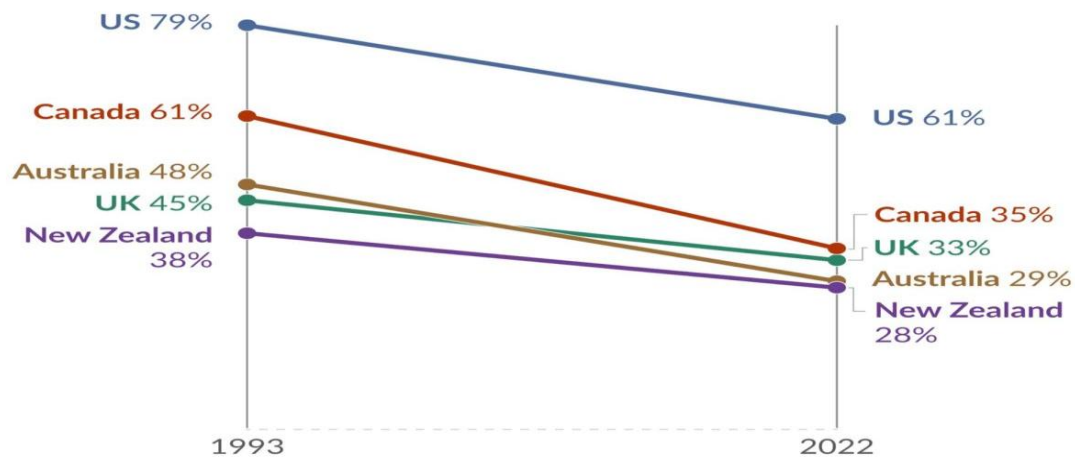
We are talking about Intergenerational community for the next month. Before I end my time up here, let's properly define it shall we? Intergenerational community is where two or more generations share their lives, use their gifts, worship together, do ministry together, and interact with one another in meaningful ways in order to live out being the body of Christ to each other and the greater community (Allen et al., 18). Dave is going to come up and share some helpful statistics on why intergenerational community is such an important topic.

Why is Intergenerational Community important? Why are we talking about this now? As humans, our mind and spirit is designed by God for community and other research has shown that in isolation, we have higher than average risks for mental health concerns and poor health outcomes. In our rapidly changing world, we face a cultural drift. Faith isn't always passed down seamlessly. To ground our hope, [let's lean on some illuminating data](#): In the U.S., the share of people who say religion is "very" or "rather" important has dropped from 79 % in 1993 to 61 % in 2022. Canada has seen a sharper decline—from 61 % to 35 %. Similar downward trends appear in the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand.

In some English-speaking countries, people value religion less than before

Our World in Data

Share of people who consider religion "very important" or "rather important" in life, 1993 to 2022.



Note: Survey question: "Would you say [religion is] very important [in your life], rather important, not very important or not important at all?"
Data source: Integrated Values Surveys (2022)

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Globally, the average number of children per family has fallen from about 5 (pre-1965) to under 2.5 today. In the U.S, It has declined from a peak of 3.75 in 1958 per family to 1.62 per family in 2023, reshaping family structures and reducing generational overlap and reducing the opportunities for faith to be passed along with it.

Total fertility rate: births per woman

Our World in Data

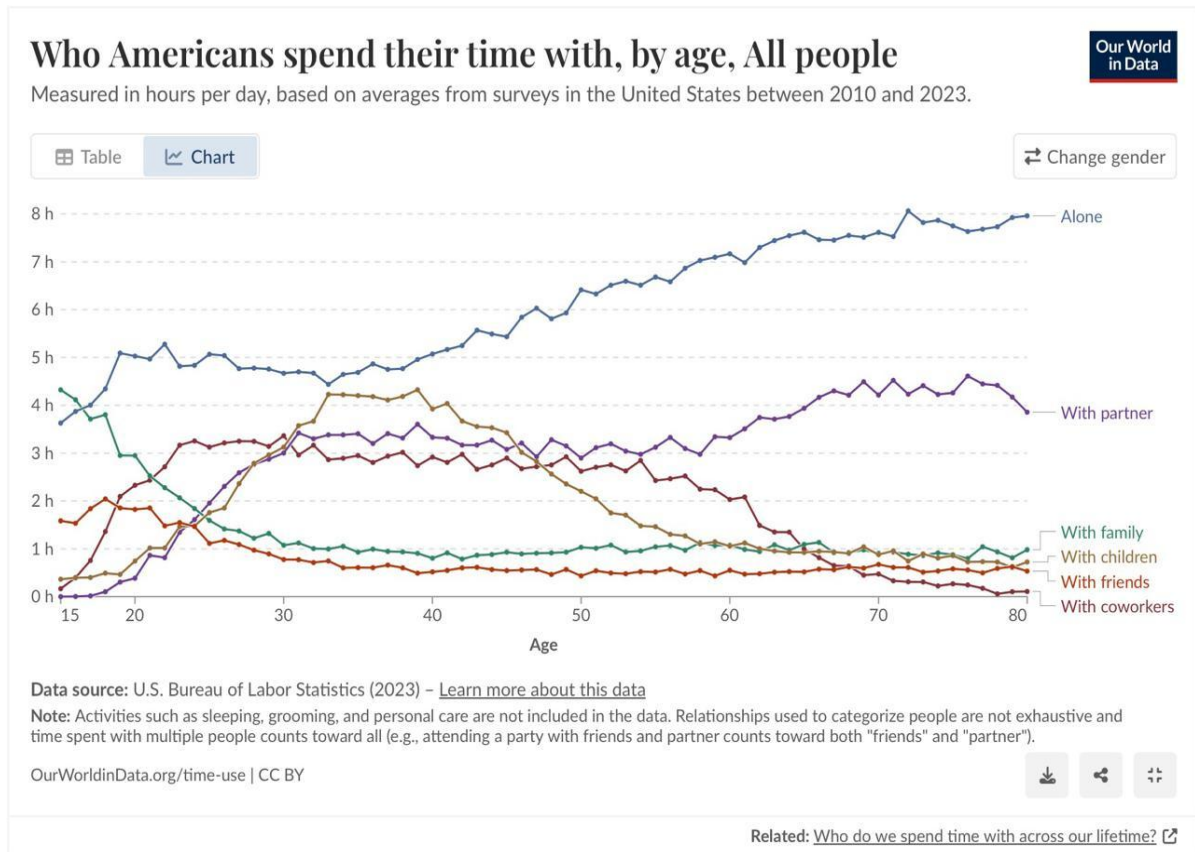
The **total fertility rate** summarizes the total number of births a woman would have, if she experienced the birth rates seen in women of each age group in one particular year across her childbearing years.



Data source: UN WPP (2024); HFD (2024) - [Learn more about this data](#)
 OurWorldinData.org/fertility-rate | CC BY

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Lastly, according to research accessed from ourworldindata.org, from 2010 and 2023 the average American spends a significant amount of time alone. Age 15 spends nearly as much time alone (3.63 hours / day) as they do with family (4.32 hrs / day) or friends (1.58 hrs / day). By age 20, this starts to trend up where time alone is significantly higher than any other category.

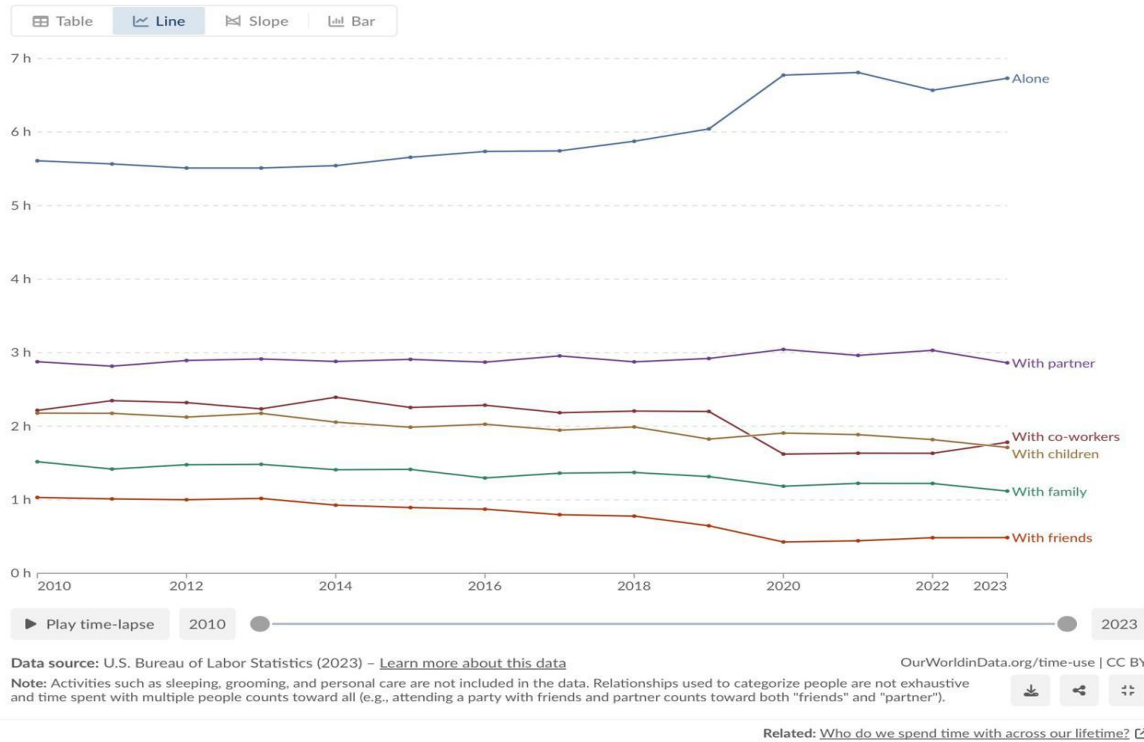


At age 20, 5.03 hrs / day alone, 2.95 hrs / day with family and 2.33 hrs / day with coworkers. At age 50, 6.33 hrs / day alone, 3.12 hrs / day with their partner and 2.70 hrs / day with coworkers. By age 72 and above, the average becomes a whopping 8.06 hrs / day alone, with 4.23 hrs / day with their partner. In 2023, it was observed that the average American (in all age groups in total), spent an average of 6.73 hrs / day alone.

Who Americans spend their time with, All ages

Measured in hours per day, based on annual averages from surveys in the United States.

Our World
in Data



These charts and numbers show how valuable and important intergenerational community is and why we should embrace it. We'll talk more about this in the coming weeks and as always you are invited to take your next steps in your journey with Christ with us. If you have any questions, please reach out to myself, any of our leaders, or the person who brought you.

Next week we will be looking more at the benefits of intergenerational community and how we can partner with God to undo the generational consequences found in Exodus 34:6-7. Would you pray with me?

Sunday to Monday Connection: Intergenerational Community is where two or more generations share their lives, use their gifts, worship together, do ministry together and interact in meaningful ways. Certainly, you've noticed that we attempt to do this every week, and we want to do it even better going forward!

- **Question:** As a church body, you make a difference in the lives of our church family. As you go through your week, take notice of how many conversations you have with friends and family from different generations. And, if you don't know where to start, start with those seated beside you this morning.
- **Next Step:** We are inviting you to answer a Slido poll in our app this week. Before we gather next Sunday, consider answering one or both of these questions: A) What bit of wisdom would you wish to impart/share to a different generation than you? B) What nugget of wisdom would you like to learn or be taught from a generation different than you?

- **Note:** If you are not a Christ follower and would like to investigate further what all this might mean for you, please come talk with any of our leaders, or the person who brought you.

Takeaways to discuss with your people (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

1. Read and discuss Proverbs 1:1-10 using Tim's comments above. Grab a commentary and explore what it says about this text, then process it with your group. What can we learn from it?
2. Review the comments on wisdom by Eugene Peterson. What do you think about them? How does wisdom work in these scenarios? Can you think of any Proverbs that support these ideas?
3. Discuss your reaction to the story Tim shared. How did it impact you, what did it help you realize, and what did it prove about what happens when we're vulnerable and minister to others?

Quotes related to this passage:

Considerations for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the "sweet spot", spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

Bibliography (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

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