

If you've been around church for a while, you've likely heard of spiritual warfare. It's one of those familiar topics we struggle to apply in real time. For example, in our conflicts and disagreements with others we often forget that everyone is tempted by the evil, unseen forces we studied in Revelation 12-13. Nobody is exempt, not even Jesus! Look with me in *Matthew 4:1-4* which says: *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered* (using a superb Old Testament quote), *"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"* Satan weaponizes confusion, shame, and hopelessness to distort our identities in God's story, but like Jesus, we can resist such tactics together by sharing God's true story of goodness, beauty, value, and significance. Our aim today is simply to remember this frequently overlooked...

**BIG IDEA: Satan tricks every generation into forgetting what God deems essential.**

I have monthly meetings where church members discuss texts and topics in an effort to ensure that our messages are biblical and relevant to our congregation. While discussing my part in this series on Being an Intergenerational Community, the team felt we could all benefit from a summary of every big idea we've heard so far. So, here goes...

Way back in January, Tim taught 4 foundational lessons on the topic of biblical community.

1. His first lesson discussed how we all live in some sort of culture that resembles ancient empires like Egypt, Babylon, and Rome. He posed questions like, **"How do we make sense of a world with so much danger, peril, and uncertainty...where pain, suffering, trauma and death are common?"** The key is to believe in God's constant presence and help through His church.

2. Lessons 2-3 asked: **“In what story do I believe I’m living? Who told me who I am?”** Here we learned how we’re all born into existing storylines, how we’re designed to gather meaning and value by sharing our stories which are formed and edited in a community (e.g., parents, siblings, grandparents, friends, neighbors, schoolmates, church family). Satan’s tactic is to isolate and distort our stories like he tried with Jesus through accusatory questions like: *“Does God really care about your needs? Will God really follow through on His promises? And Can God really be trusted?”*. We learned that our ministry, therefore, involves listening to each other's stories in full, staying in the room, and recalling God’s true story together.
3. Lesson 4 asked: **“Who are my people, and how do we act?”** He mentioned the Beatitudes which we plan to explore during Lent, and some [Bible Project videos](#) to watch which explain how those attitudes are not a checklist of things to do but descriptors of Christ’s character. The implication is that God’s empowering Spirit of grace can make Christ’s qualities true of us!

Our current series builds on Tim’s amazing foundation by proving God’s Old Testament pattern of uniting generations. Ironically, modern society systematically separates people. The general expectation is that babies go to day care, children go to school, parents go to offices, and the elderly go to nursing homes. Not to villainize such places, but wisdom begs the question: *“How might this diminish sustained intergenerational interactions that God says we need?”* Let’s summarize what we’ve learned so far...

1. Our starting pitcher, Tim, took the mound in week 1 to tell us **Wisdom is designed to be passed through generations of faithful followers of Christ**. He shared a chat he had with a veteran who chose to focus on the good God had done rather than being angry and bitter. Later in that lesson, we pulled Tim and brought in Dave to close with stats about why intergenerational community is vital in modern times. I think those 2 were a winning combination!

2. In week 2, Tim threw a curve ball from Exodus 34:6-7 by suggesting **we can partner with God to undo generational consequences**. It seemed like a typical pitch on generational consequences which took a surprising turn towards how God's steadfast love can renew and rewrite our painful stories! We learned that mechanisms by which we pass down brokenness, damage, and iniquity to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generations can be transformed by God into means by which we partner with Him to bring repentance, faith, and restoration to ourselves and others (i.e., grace is greater!).
3. Baseball guru Gary took us back to faith fundamentals in week 3 by sharing **Old Testament critical moments** where all generations gathered to hear from God and be renewed. He proved that spiritual formation is enhanced by intergenerational gatherings and challenged us to see this series as a critical moment for our church. You see, polarizing segregation provides a powerful platform for churches to attract more people to Christ by our remarkable intergenerational unity!
4. Week 4, rookie Bill Wiehe pitched his 3<sup>rd</sup> career game and doubled down on Gary's fundamentals by repeating that **Everyone, young and old, was included in the major Old Testament feasts**. His authentic and simple delivery revealed how elements of our Sunday liturgy (e.g., communion, confession, assurance, giving) are rooted in the good habits God gave ancient Israel. By the way, Tim has benched himself to prep for January where he'll do a 3-game stint on the value of habits and what each generation needs. But the highlight of Bill's time on the mound was when he said that God wants us to celebrate more often! Knowing life would be hard, God's law prescribed 7 annual feasts for Israel. The pitch we didn't see coming was that New Testament churches weave these celebratory elements into Sunday services. He emphasized the value of traditions (habits) where we pause, rest, and reflect on God's redemptive goodness together.
5. Our veteran, Gary, climbed the mound again in week 5 and threw quite a slider...he said **telling the story of God's faithfulness has generational**

**ripple effects.** He threw several Old Testament examples our way of how God's grace builds relationships over generations. He clinched the win with some high heat from Barna research on how the church's failure to foster intergenerational relationships correlates with young adults quitting church but how those bonds are cited as why some never left or eventually returned to faith.

As you've absorbed all these lessons, maybe you've wondered, *"Why are we investing so much time and energy on the topic of intergenerational relationships?"* It's because Satan wants churches to miss their value--such relationships are God's remedy for how so many feel today...uncertain, hopeless, sad, exhausted, unheard, and overwhelmed by the needs of an always on world. Ponder this prophetic quote by Author C.S. Lewis [to a friend back in 1946](#): *"It is one of the evils of rapid diffusion of news that the sorrows of all the world come to us every morning. I think each village was meant to feel pity for its own sick and poor whom it can help, and I doubt if it is the duty of any private person to fix his mind on ills which he cannot help. This may even become an escape from the works of charity we really can do to those we know."* I wonder, *"How has information overload kept you from loving neighbors you see every day?"* This not only affirms our BIG IDEA that **Satan tricks every generation into forgetting what God deems essential**, but it's why we tell you every week that wherever you are on your journey of trusting Christ or if you're still wondering whether Jesus is worthy of your trust, you don't have to work through that alone. Please gather with your trusted team this week and discuss questions like: 1) *"How exactly am I feeling about this world?"* (if you struggle with identifying emotions like me, check out the helpful list in our notes). 2) *"In what ways are my habits forming me into a disciple of something other than Christ?"* 3) *"What simple changes in my life would put me on a better path?"* All this will prepare you for next week's debut of a grand slam idea to fuel intergenerational discipleship.

However, now it's time for the 7<sup>th</sup> inning stretch, but we'll be serving up something more nutritious than peanuts and cracker jacks...the bread and cup which represent Christ's body and blood. It's because Christ died and rose again that we're

sure the generations can be united in meaningful and sustainable ways. After all, Ephesians 1-2 say the cross breaks down all dividing walls so we can grow into a unified and diverse family (body) under His headship. Every Sunday, we come to His family table as a diverse group to celebrate and embody the unity He willingly purchased for us with His life. It's also a time to renew our commitment to practicing unifying virtues such as repentance, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. Believers, come celebrate with us when you're ready!

**Sunday to Monday Connection:** Today's Big Idea, Satan tricks every generation into forgetting what God deems essential. But what a wonderful Savior we have that He provided us with a family of intergenerational believers to help navigate the world. It's not by coincidence that we are all here today, it's God's plan for us to come together as one body, under His leadership, to weave together the wisdom of all generations, within our community. I think this series has been a home run, don't you?

- **Next Step:** All of us can take a next step in being God's intergenerational community, and this week, I simply want you to think about and discuss what that could be for 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. Revisit the C.S. Lewis quote above and then consider...How has knowing and worrying about problems tricked us into thinking we're involved in solutions, and how might this be keeping us from helping our local neighbors?
2. Some seem to think that society is changed by anxiety or angry outbursts, but how can people of peace renew culture by resembling Jesus where we live, learn, work, and play? It might help if you meditate on Galatians 5:16-6:10.
3. Read the last paragraph about communion, then discuss this question: "How does forgetting the blessings of Christ's cross make it harder for you to love and appreciate those who are different from you and vice versa?"

**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?

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

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# **Comprehensive List of Emotions**

## **Happiness / Joy**

- Contentment
- Excitement
- Delight
- Amusement
- Satisfaction
- Pride
- Love
- Optimism
- Euphoria
- Gratitude
- Cheerfulness
- Bliss
- Relief
- Hope

## **Sadness**

- Disappointment
- Grief
- Loneliness
- Despair
- Guilt
- Shame
- Heartache
- Hopelessness
- Depression
- Regret
- Sorrow
- Homesickness
- Discouragement

## **Anger**

- Frustration
- Irritation
- Annoyance
- Rage
- Resentment
- Jealousy
- Bitterness
- Hostility
- Exasperation
- Fury
- Hatred
- Agitation

## **Fear**

- Anxiety
- Apprehension
- Worry
- Terror
- Panic
- Nervousness
- Insecurity
- Dread
- Paranoia
- Horror
- Unease
- Vulnerability

## **Surprise**

- Amazement
- Shock
- Astonishment
- Wonder
- Confusion
- Awe
- Disbelief
- Perplexity

## **Disgust**

- Contempt
- Revulsion
- Distaste
- Aversion
- Nausea
- Scorn
- Disdain
- Loathing

## **Trust**

- Acceptance
- Assurance
- Confidence
- Faith
- Safety
- Security
- Respect

## **Love / Affection**

- Affection
- Attraction
- Caring
- Compassion
- Warmth
- Passion
- Desire
- Trust
- Tenderness
- Admiration
- Empathy
- Anticipation
- Interest
- Eagerness
- Curiosity
- Vigilance
- Excitement
- Suspense
- Hope
- Expectation

## **Embarrassment / Shame**

- Awkwardness
- Humiliation
- Guilt
- Mortification
- Self-consciousness

## **Blended / Nuanced Emotions**

- Awe (fear + wonder)
- Nostalgia (joy + sadness)
- Relief (joy after fear/stress)
- Compassion (love + sadness)
- Envy (sadness + anger)
- Gloating (joy in another's misfortune)