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SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

A REFUGE FROM THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE

How the Church Protects the Next Generation, and Why It Matters

> We cannot reverse the age, but like Jehoshabeath and Jehoiada we can create a refuge where the next generation is protected, consecrated and called, and when we take care of kids, God takes care of us.

MAIN TEXT
2 Chronicles 22:1-12

FIRST PREACHED
November 30, 2025

SERIES
We're Generationally Intentional, Week 1 of 2

BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, is a prophetic typology of the spirit of the age: a counselor in doing wickedly that rises up in every generation to turn young minds away from the Lord and to wipe out the next generation of heirs.
2. The spirit of the age is currently carried largely through technology and social media, which are engineered to release uncommon levels of dopamine and are effectively raising the next generation.
3. Like Jehoshabeath and Jehoiada the priest, the church protects kids for the kingdom. We cannot reverse the age, but we can create space for refuge, a window of consecration where the next generation steps away from that influence and is equipped, trained and promoted into its kingdom calling.
4. When we take care of kids, God will take care of us. Facility work on the children's spaces is not maintenance, it is souls, and it is what earns the trust of parents and grandparents.
5. Giving is seed. Ask the Lord what to give toward the vision offering, name the seed to the need, and expect God to move on it.



WATCH IT PREACHED

youtu.be/sZXLX-Mby9Q



READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/a-refuge-from-the-spirit-of-the-age

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This message opens a two-week series on one of the church's values: we are generationally intentional. It walks through the origin story of King Joash in 2 Chronicles 22 to 24, reads Athaliah as a picture of the spirit of the age, and lands on a practical ask: invest in the spaces where children receive ministry.

The message was preached the Sunday before a year-end vision offering, and a recorded walkthrough of the children's areas played in the middle of it. If you preach it, replace that walkthrough with your own church's real need. The point is not the building. The point is that parents need to see they can trust you with their kids.

Be clear early that "generationally intentional" does not mean "only kids and youth." It means every generation in the house is remembered, from the nursery to the nursing home. Keep the tone warm and fast. There are a lot of names in the reading, so put the text on screen.

Introduction

We are generationally intentional. That is not the same as focusing only on kids and youth. It means being intentional about every generation that finds itself in our church.

There is a wrong reason to care about generations. Years ago, as a 19-year-old worship leader, Pastor Jason was told by a church consultant, "Son, you need to sing some hymns… because the people who like that pay the bills." That is not why we do it. We are generationally intentional because every generation, every person, matters to the Lord.

Illustration: the family table. A generationally intentional church is like a family. Everything in the house tends to revolve around the kids: their schedules, their stuff, what they want to eat (chicken tenders 3,000 days in a row). But everybody in the house is remembered. From the nursery to the nursing home, there will always be something here that ministers to every generation.

Today's message leans toward the next generation. We are going to look at the origin story of a king named Joash.

> **2 CHRONICLES 22:1-4 ESV**
>
> [1] And the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his place, for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned. [2] Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri. [3] He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly. [4] He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as the house of Ahab had done. For after the death of his father they were his counselors, to his undoing.

Pay attention to this woman. Her son's mother "was his counselor in doing wickedly" (2 Chronicles 22:3).

> **2 CHRONICLES 22:10 ESV**
>
> [10] Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family of the house of Judah.

When her son the king dies, Athaliah wipes out every potential heir to the throne and takes the kingdom for herself. It is unethical, immoral and against the order God had put in place, a lineage of kings.

1. Athaliah Is a Picture of the Spirit of the Age

Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, is a prophetic typology of the spirit of the age. In every era, in every generation, in every season, an Athaliah spirit rises up. It is the dominant mindset of the culture, and it shapes young people's minds away from the Lord.

Notice what the text calls her: a counselor in doing wickedly. The Athaliah spirit assists in wickedness. It assists in distraction. It assists in turning people from the Lord. And it wants one thing: to consume the next generation, the way Athaliah killed every heir to the throne.

THE COUNSELOR IN YOUR POCKET

We all carry one in our pockets. Technology is not evil. It can be good and helpful, and there is nothing wrong with using it. But it can also be a counselor in doing wickedly.

Social media companies design their apps to keep you engaged, because engagement makes them money. They do it through dopamine, a naturally occurring chemical that tells your brain, "That felt good. Go do it again." Dopamine itself is good, but these apps are built to trigger it again and again. Not long ago, that kind of artificial rush was something people mostly chased through substance abuse. Now it sits in your pocket, and we hardly think about it.

For adults, this is something we are adapting to. For the next generation, it is the water they swim in. They are not coming into technology. They are being raised by it: social media, YouTube, Netflix, TikTok and whatever comes out tomorrow.

Illustration: "What is the internet, anyway?" In 1994, on the Today Show, Bryant Gumbel and Katie Couric could not work out what the "@" in an email address was called, and one of them finally asked, "What is the internet, anyway?" (Pastor Jason played the clip.) Most adults in the room came into that world from the outside. Contrast that with a toddler handed an iPad who can work it better than her dad by the second time she picks it up. She has never known a screen you could not touch.

This generation is wrapped up in it, and the Athaliah spirit is attaching itself to it. It is pervasive, and it is grabbing the next generation.

2. We Protect Kids for the Kingdom

> **2 CHRONICLES 22:11-12** ESV
>
> 11 But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king's sons who were about to be put to death, and she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram and wife of Jehoiada the priest, because she was a sister of Ahaziah, hid him from Athaliah, so that she did not put him to death. 12 And he remained with them six years, hidden in the house of God, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

> **2 CHRONICLES 23:1** ESV
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> 1 But in the seventh year Jehoiada took courage and entered into a covenant with the commanders of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, Azariah the son of Obed, Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri.

> **2 CHRONICLES 23:11** ESV
>
> 11 Then they brought out the king's son and put the crown on him and gave him the testimony. And they proclaimed him king, and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and they said, "Long live the king."

Like Jehoshabeath and Jehoiada the priest, we protect kids for the kingdom. This is our solemn duty as a church: to protect the future of the kingdom of God on earth.

WE CANNOT REVERSE THE AGE

The solutions that get tossed around often sound like this: get every electronic device out of the house, get rid of your phone. Nobody is going to clip a rotary phone to their belt. We cannot reverse the age.

WE CAN CREATE A REFUGE

What we can do is create space for refuge: windows of time when the next generation steps away from the constant influence of the age, from that Athaliah spirit breathing down their neck.

The Bible has a word for separating yourself to the Lord: consecration. In that space, young people can receive ministry that encourages them, inspires them, equips them, trains them, prepares them, and even promotes them into their role as kingdom ambassadors. “We are ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Illustration: called to business. A young person in the church recently sensed a call of God to business. We talk about being “called to ministry,” but God has a call on every young person, and they can receive it in the house of the Lord if we create space for that refuge.

We cannot remove them from the culture, and we do not want to. But we can become a refuge from its influence.

When we take care of kids, God will take care of us.

3. When We Take Care of Kids, God Takes Care of Us

SHOW THE NEED

At this point Pastor Jason played a recorded walkthrough of the church’s children’s spaces. Use your own church’s need here.

In the walkthrough he showed what parents see when they drop off their children: a secure check-in and a locked door (the first priority is that kids are safe), and then the work still to be done. Mismatched lights down the hallway. Stained ceiling tiles. Holes in drywall, a broken television, a missing door frame that was never repaired. A toddler room with a loose vent, broken light guards and a sink that does not work right. An elementary room, “the loft,” with dated colors and hand-me-down furniture that could become a modern, multipurpose space for kids on Sunday and youth during the week.

His summary: “This does not communicate that we care about your kids. And we do care about kids, but we need to make sure we’re communicating that.” People in the church had told him that if the children’s spaces were up to standard, their children and grandchildren would come.

JOASH RESTORES THE HOUSE

> **2 CHRONICLES 24:4** ESV
>
> 4 After this Joash decided to restore the house of the Lord.

The child who was protected in the house of God grows up to restore the house of God.

Part of a pastor’s job is to steward the property God has entrusted to the church and get as much kingdom fruit out of it as possible. Some days it looks like paint going on a wall. That is souls. Fixing an air conditioner is not about an air conditioner. That is souls. Picking up trash in the building is not about trash. That is souls. We are in the soul business, and the building is no more than a utility for seeing more and more people go to heaven.

Every one of these projects is someone's son or someone's granddaughter coming to know the Lord.

IT IS A FOOT TRAFFIC PROBLEM

Some ask, "Why not just go out and minister to everybody?" Twenty years of ministry have shown Pastor Jason that a church can see substantially more people come to Jesus by doing church really well.

Illustration: the altar call. Pastor Jason has given altar calls from this pulpit and not seen people respond, and he has wrestled with the Lord over it. The reason is simple: they are not coming through the door. At a friend's church, on the first Sunday after he started traveling again, 61 of the 600 people present gave their lives to Jesus. If you give people the opportunity, they will respond. It is not a special anointing. They just have to be in the room.

So we have to do things that build trust, foot traffic and excitement, and one of the simplest is signaling to young parents, and to grandparents raising children, that they can trust us with their kids. Sometimes that starts with ceiling tiles.

Illustration: the tetanus shot. A friend who saw the plans said, "You know, that's nice. I don't feel like I need a tetanus shot to go into your children's ministry area." Church members will not say that, because they love the church. But a young family walking through for the first time might decide, "I don't think I'm going to do that."

PARENTS DECIDE ON KIDS MINISTRY

People will give in on their Pentecostal theology. They will give in on their church preference. They will give in even on some sound biblical doctrine if a church has a kids ministry they can trust their kids with. It is a shame, but it is the reality.

And too often, the more spiritual a church is, the more children's ministry becomes an afterthought. Parents end up choosing the church where they can drop off their kids without worrying, even if it does not have the full gospel experience. It does not have to be either/or. You do not have to sacrifice the power of God to take care of kids.

Illustration: "We pled the blood." Pastor Jason and Ashleigh's daughter Ali was born at 24 weeks and spent three months in the hospital. About a month after coming home she caught pertussis and had to go back. Years later, visiting what they had been told was the most Pentecostal church in the area, they went to check in their kids, and the woman at the desk told them a child with a highly contagious respiratory illness had just been in the room. "But it's okay. We pled the blood of Jesus." Jesus ought to be your first phone call. But as a parent, he wanted to hear how many gallons of Lysol they had used.

Kids matter on every front: because they matter, because their parents matter, because grandma and great-grandma matter.

4. Ask the Lord What to Give

Ask the Lord, not the pastor, what He would have you give.

MODELING GENEROSITY

Pastor Jason chose to share this from his notes, following the example of a pastor he respects. There are a lot of misconceptions about churches and money. To come to this church, his family took close to a 50% pay cut, at a time when their main source of income was declining. About three days after his first sermon here, they sowed a $12,000 seed into the church, because the church needed it. It was the first time they had spoken about it publicly.

Soon after, Ashleigh made a scary change in her business, walking away from income they knew was coming, and within five weeks they saw God reverse the trajectory of their income.

He is not asking because he gets a bonus. He is asking because if the church is going to go to the next level, someone has to sow seed. God "is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

THERE IS A SEED FOR THAT

You remember "There's an app for that." There is a seed for that. Some of you need God to do something that has gone beyond the normal reach of prayer. You need a major breakthrough. Ask the Lord what He would have you give, press that need into the seed, sow it, and watch God work. "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing" (2 Corinthians 9:10).

NO PRESSURE

A week from today, the church will receive its vision offering. Why call it that? Because we have vision, and now we need provision. If you do not give, that is fine. If you give $5, that is fine. If you give $5,000, that is fine. Seek the Lord this week and do whatever He asks.

Conclusion

The spirit of the age is real, and it wants to consume the next generation. We cannot reverse the age. But like Jehoshabeath and Jehoiada, we can hide a generation in the house of God, consecrate them, and one day bring them out with a crown on their head. And the child protected in the house will grow up to restore the house.

When we take care of kids, God will take care of us.

Close in praise.



ABOUT

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