JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

THE GENERATIONAL MULTIPLIER

Influence, Inheritance and Legacy: How Faith Passes From One Generation to the Next

> Faith kept in a family grows like a snowball rolling downhill, and if we get a vision for our family line, God can carry it past the third generation into a legacy that blesses people we will never meet.

MAIN TEXT
Hebrews 11:17-22

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SERIES
We're Generationally Intentional, Week 2 of 2

BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. God works generationally, not just individually: the promise is for you and for your children.
2. Level one, generational influence: faith often enters a family indirectly, through someone outside it who uses their influence for the gospel.
3. Level two, generational inheritance: faith is handed down directly by involving Jesus in the home and by trusting the Lord with your kids instead of trying to be the Holy Spirit for them.
4. Faith usually breaks down at the third generation, because a personal word from God gets traded for an inherited one.
5. Hebrews 11 uniquely names a fourth generation, Joseph, and once faith survives the third generation its blessing reaches centuries rather than one household.
6. Level three, generational legacy: get a vision for your family line so that descendants you never meet are still serving the Lord.
7. Past failures with your children do not disqualify the family, because there is no condemnation and the work depends on God's mercy, not your record.



WATCH IT PREACHED

youtu.be/vVoM_wT8ny8



READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/the-generational-multiplier

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This message closes a two-week series on the church's value of being generationally intentional. Week one looked at Joash and the call to create a refuge from the spirit of the age for the next generation. This week widens the lens to the whole family line.

The message moves through three levels by which faith passes down: generational influence, generational inheritance and generational legacy. In the middle it pauses on the third generation, the point where faith most often breaks down, and then returns to Hebrews 11 for the payoff: the list carries the familiar trio of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob on to a fourth name, Joseph. Hold that detail back until the end. Tell the room early that something is hidden in the text and they will have to wait for it.

It was preached on the day of a year-end vision offering and ends with prayer over lost and prodigal family members. Leave room for that prayer. Many people in the room will be carrying a family member on their heart.

Introduction

We are a generationally intentional church. We are not only focused on the next generation. We are mindful of every generation in the house of the Lord, and that requires some give and take: the thing that blesses one generation will not always bless yours, but it will come back around.

I have noticed that if you can keep faith in a family long enough, it is like a snowball rolling down a hill. It slowly gets bigger and more powerful, a greater force to be reckoned with, the longer you can keep it in the family. That is the generational multiplier.

> **HEBREWS 11:17-22 ESV**
>
> 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises
> was in the act of offering up his only son, 18 of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring
> be named." 19 He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which,
> figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. 20 By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and
> Esau. 21 By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the
> head of his staff. 22 By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites
> and gave directions concerning his bones.

Today we look at the patriarchs of our faith: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. At the end of the message, come back to this text. There is something hidden in it.

GOD WORKS THROUGH GENERATIONS

He is not just the God of Abraham. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Blast off a handful of scriptures to prove it:

- "For the promise is for you and for your children" (Acts 2:39).
- "His steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).
- "Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD" (Psalm 102:18). It is our responsibility to keep a record of how God moves in our generation so we can hand it to the next.
- "The steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children" (Psalm 103:17).
- "One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts" (Psalm 145:4).

It runs both directions. We pass down what God has done. But when God moves in a younger generation, that is a blessing to the generation that came before. Some of you have been praying for your family for years, and a younger generation is going to be the one that reaches the family members you have been praying for.

LED BY VISION, NOT DESIRE

Illustration: the young man in the cycle. Pastor Jason recently spoke with a young man who is called to ministry but keeps making choices that leave him in a spiraling cycle. The words that came out, almost prophetically, were these: "You are being led in your life by your desire and not by vision."

If you lead your life by desire, doing the next thing you want to do, you will keep finding yourself back at or behind your starting point. If you get vision, you can move past the things that go wrong. Peter writes that "after you have suffered a little while," God "will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you" (1 Peter 5:10). You need vision to get there.

Today is about vision for your family. Sometimes you have to make peace with the idea that it may not happen in your lifetime. But if you get a vision for what you want God to do in your family and start moving in that direction, God is faithful to do what He said He would do.

Illustration: tomorrow, not today. Pastor Jason heard a quote that week attributed to John Morgan, founder of the Morgan & Morgan law firm, a man known for living simply despite great wealth: "We've been able to generate all of this wealth because we've decided that the only thing that matters is tomorrow, not today."

The passing of faith happens from one generation to the next through three levels.

1. Generational Influence

Not everyone comes from an Abraham, Isaac and Jacob situation. Many people did not grow up in church. Pastor Jason was raised far from the house of the Lord, in a house of turmoil and dysfunction. If it were not for people who used their influence for the gospel, he would not be saved today. He and Ashleigh are both "Abrahams" in their families: the place where it begins.

Generational influence is not a direct deposit from family. It comes through kingdom-minded people outside the family who use their influence for the gospel. Someone gives to something. Someone has an idea for a ministry. Someone is kind in the right moment.

Illustration: lunch at the middle school. For Pastor Jason, it was a ministry of college-aged students from a local church who came and ate lunch with kids at his middle school. They may never have known what would come from it.

WHERE DID ABRAHAM'S FAITH COME FROM?

A question for your own Bible study: where did Abraham get his faith? Not at home. Joshua tells us that Terah, Abraham's father, "served other gods" (Joshua 24:2).

Here we step into extra-biblical tradition. Many ancient Jewish teachers believed Abraham learned about the one true God from Noah or from Noah's son Shem. We do not usually think of Noah and Abraham as alive at the same time, but Noah was ten generations before Abram (Genesis 11:10-26), and by the ages given in Genesis, Noah was still alive for roughly the first 58 years of Abram's life. Abraham was already an adult, already facing the grief of having no child, while Noah and Shem were alive. Maybe someone said, "You have a problem, and we know the One who can solve it. Let me tell you about the flood."

Even though it did not come through his family, it came through influence.

MANY ON-RAMPS

There is only one way to the Father, and His name is Jesus Christ (John 14:6). But there are many on-ramps to Jesus. Anybody in this room could be the conduit for a whole family to be turned around, and it could start with an invitation to a Christmas service. What could a single invite card lead to? What could a child's first visit to church lead to? What could one gospel presentation do for a family line?

Influence is indirect, but somehow it catches a person, and that person starts the generational multiplier.

2. Generational Inheritance

"A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children" (Proverbs 13:22).

That is about more than money, but it includes money. A practical word: get life insurance and make a will, so that when you pass away nobody is fighting over what is theirs. Pastor Jason has watched

brothers and sisters in their 60s and 70s fight tooth and nail because their mother never wrote it down. You do not have to have a million dollars to leave a million dollars.

But the deeper inheritance is faith. Inheritance is a direct deposit from one generation to another: the moment you see your kids give their lives to Jesus Christ. Two things help.

INVOLVE JESUS IN THE HOME

In Genesis 18, Abraham looks up and sees the Lord coming toward his tent with two others. He invites them in, hurries to Sarah and has her make cakes, and they eat together (Genesis 18:1-8).

Your family needs to see you sit down with the Lord at home. "Church Jesus" is not enough. Your kids need to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that your faith is not a social club but a real, burning faith.

> **REVELATION 3:20** ESV
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> [20] Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

The King James says Jesus will "sup" with you. Jesus wants to come in and eat. Involve Him in the house.

TRUST THE LORD WITH YOUR KIDS

One of the hardest things for good, well-meaning, Spirit-filled parents to understand is that you are not the Holy Spirit. You have to trust the Lord with your kids.

As Abraham walked Isaac up the mountain, fully willing to obey, he said, "God will provide for himself the lamb" (Genesis 22:8). Your kids are going to go through a process. At times they will scare you silly. But if you stop trying to be the Holy Spirit in their lives and let God do His work, there is a Lamb for the sacrifice, and His name is Jesus Christ. That is the Lamb your kids are going to find.

3. The Third Generation

Faith usually becomes hardest to keep in a family in the third generation. If Abraham serves the Lord, Isaac will probably serve the Lord. It is not easy or automatic, but it is likely. When you get down to Jacob, it can fall off. Scripture shows the pattern again and again:

- **Elijah, Elisha, Gehazi.** Elisha asked for "a double portion" of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings 2:9). Gehazi, Elisha's servant, was out for selfish gain (2 Kings 5:20-27).
- **Moses, Joshua, and a generation with no name.** After Joshua, "there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD" (Judges 2:10). They stepped into the greatest fulfillment of the promise any of them had seen, and ran off to serve idols.
- **David, Solomon, Rehoboam.** David, a man after God's own heart. Solomon, the wisest and wealthiest man who ever lived. Then Rehoboam, who told the people to come back in three days, answered

them harshly, and split the kingdom his father and grandfather had built (1 Kings 12:1-19).

But there is also power in the third generation. Timothy, who traveled with the apostle Paul, received a faith that "dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice" (2 Timothy 1:5), and church tradition remembers him as a leader of the church at Ephesus. And Jacob, the third generation from Abraham, had twelve sons who became the core of the nation of Israel.

TRADING THE GARMENT OF PRAISE FOR COATTAILS

Why the third generation? The enemy sees the potential and attacks it. But it is also simply harder. That far into a lineage of faith, it is easy to trade an authentic experience for grandmother's stories, to come to church because Daddy wants you to rather than because faith is real inside you. It is easy to trade "the garment of praise" (Isaiah 61:3) for the spiritual coattails of somebody who came before you. And people stop doing business with God.

Watch it in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

> **GENESIS 12:1-3 ESV**
>
> [1] Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. [2] And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Abraham gets a personal word from God, and he follows it.

> **GENESIS 26:1-3 ESV**
>
> [1] Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech king of the Philistines. [2] And the LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. [3] Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father.

Isaac gets a personal word from God, and it is a different word from his father's. Abraham was told to go. Isaac was told to stay.

> **GENESIS 28:1-2 ESV**
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> [1] Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and directed him, "You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women. [2] Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your mother's father, and take as your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

Jacob gets a word from Isaac. Abraham gets a personal word from God. Isaac gets a personal word from God. Jacob leans on his father's faith, not his own.

Illustration: tear up your own Bible. Pastor Jason writes all over his Bible. In the Bible-journaling world, people love the idea of filling a Bible with notes and passing it on to their kids. That is sweet. But his goal is not to hand his kids his Bible. It is to hand them the passion and relationship with the Lord that drives them to tear up their own. When they get his Bible one day, he wants them to say, "I like this, but it ain't got the stuff mine's got in it."

Let your kids go through the process. It took Jacob 20 years, but there came a point when he got down and did business with God. He wrestled, and he came out with a brand-new name (Genesis 32:24-28). Give them time. God is good.

4. The Fourth Generation: Joseph

Go back to Hebrews 11:17-22.

Throughout Scripture we hear of the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, or the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: a grouping of three. But here the list keeps going. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Not three generations but four.

Look at the pattern:

- Abraham passed the blessing to one son (Genesis 25:5).
- Isaac blessed two sons, Jacob and Esau.
- Jacob blessed his grandsons, the sons of Joseph (Genesis 48:8-20).
- Joseph, once faith made it through the third generation, spoke a word that carried his people for centuries. He "made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones" (Hebrews 11:22; Genesis 50:24-25).

For about 400 years, through many generations of bondage in Egypt, Israel held on to the promise God had spoken to Abraham (Genesis 15:13) and that Joseph had pointed to: a day was coming when God would bring them out.

5. Generational Legacy

This is why you have to get a vision for your family. You can see a dynasty of born-again, Spirit-filled descendants emerge. Not one person in the family serving the Lord. Not just grandma and one grandson in church. Stick with God long enough that one day you will look down from heaven at family members you never met, still serving the Lord.

That is generational legacy for the kingdom. Your children can be saved. Your grandchildren can be saved. Something can happen in your family in this season that your great-great-great-grandchildren will still be living in.

IF YOU FEEL YOU HAVE MESSED UP

Maybe you feel you have messed up with your kids. Maybe you got off track. Every parent makes wrong decisions. But God, "being rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4), sent His Son to the cross for you. He can do a great work in your children's lives, not because of your mistakes but because of His goodness, His power and His rich mercy.

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Stop worrying about the decisions you already made and start paying attention to the decisions you are making today. The question is not, "Why didn't we do family devotions?" The question is, "How do I get Jesus into the house today?" Start where you are.

WHERE ARE YOU STANDING?

- **Are you an Abraham?** Are you bringing Jesus into the house? It does not have to be over the top. Pastor Jason's family does not do devotions around the dinner table. But they pray, there are open Bibles all over the living room, they listen to a lot of preaching, and if the kids get in the car with him they will probably hear something about Jesus. You will not do it all right, but you can do something right. Keep them in church. If they are young enough, make them come. If they eat your food and use your gas money, make them come.
- **Are you an Isaac?** Are you holding the standard, or giving in on every little thing?
- **Are you a Jacob?** Are you doing business with God? If your family has been in the faith a long time, have you had a real encounter with a real Jesus, or do you just know how to do church? Wrestle with God. Let Him into every area of your life.
- **Are you a Joseph?** Are you carrying the legacy and the prophetic vision for your family? Have you said, "We are going to serve the Lord for generation after generation"?

USE EVERY OPPORTUNITY

In every season of change, you get a window of opportunity. Use it. Invite people to what God is doing. Take a stack of Christmas invitation cards and do something with them, in faith. Your kids shall be saved.

There is power in sowing. If you have a need, there is a seed for that need.

Conclusion

Have people lift their hands, especially those who do not know how they will see their family come to the Lord. The good news: you do not have to see it. You just have to receive it.

Pray for the peace of God, "which surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7), over every parent and grandparent believing for their family. Thank God for those who have been faithful in bringing Him into their homes. Pray that every tear sown in prayer would be answered with generations coming to know Him. Pray for every lost son, daughter, grandson and granddaughter, and call every far-off and prodigal

family member home. Declare the word over the house: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31).



ABOUT

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