

What Kind Of Bridge Are You Building?

Growing up, I had an uncle John, V. L., my grandparents, and host of other older folks, around me. Looking back, I now realize how those people grew up differently than I. They were born just before or right after the turn of the century. Often, they would speak of the "old days" and relate how hard life was back then. Sometimes they spoke on those earlier years almost longing for those "old days." Then my parents would talk about their upbringing and what it was to grow up during the "Great Depression" and how they struggled to survive. While I learned a lot about those days in history classes, I knew a lot more from those two generations.

This got me to thinking as each generation serves as a bridge from the past to the future. Our children have heard Regena and I talk about our upbringing. We can talk about things our children really can't relate. They grew up with computers, riding lawn mowers, innumerable television channels, and of course the internet. I know they must wonder how we survived such a harsh time or having to "push mow the yard" or having only one television station, or not having air conditioning in the house. It is the right and duty of each generation to bridge the past to the present in order to prepare the future generation. This is especially true in religion and the spiritual values we instill in our children.

In the early part of the Book of Judges we read a little about Joshua and his generation. They were faithful to the Lord; they were fighters and warriors as they entered Canaan. But they were also mortal and like all mortals they passed away. "When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel."

(Judges 2:10) They were not able or willing to build the bridge between themselves, the Lord, and their children. The next generation may have known the facts about the Lord but they did not have the conviction to do so.

I realize each generation must decide for themselves what they believe and how convicted they will be in upholding those beliefs. "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." (Ezekiel 18:20) The fundamental truth in Ezekiel 18 is individual accountability. At the same time, the Bible teaches us to teach our children in the ways of the Lord. "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6.4). Timothy's mother and grandmother were able to bridge that gap between their faith and his faith while other generations failed. There were faithful Kings in the Old Testament and they had unfaithful sons. Therefore, I want to suggest some areas in particular for today's Christians to build that bridge so the next generation will be faithful.

If we want our children to know who God is, we must teach them. But more than just teaching of His existence we must teach them their relationship to Him and their purpose in life. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all." (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

If we want them to be saved and go to heaven, we must teach them why they need to be saved and how to do it. Which means we must teach them about sin and its consequences. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6.23a) Sin is more than something bad, it is life killing! It will claim more lives than all diseases, murders, wars, and accidents

put together. But we must also teach them God loves them and wants everyone to be saved. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23). We must teach them the only remedy for sin is the blood of Christ and it is only through His blood we have the remission of our sins, Ephesians. 1.7. The only way to have that blood is by believing in Jesus as God's Son, confessing that belief, repenting of our sins, and being baptized for the remission of our sins. Those are not options but commandments given by our Lord and Savior.

If we want them to serve God and be members of God's family, we must set the examples. By example we show our children and the next generation what is really important. If they see us placing God first in our lives, they will know that it is important to do the same. If they see us putting the world ahead of God and serving Him only when it is convenient then they will do the same.

If we want our children to be loving husbands/wives, fathers/mothers we must bridge the gap between what society is teaching and what the Bible teaches. They must see mom and dad committed to God and each other. Ephesians 5 is a whole series of lessons comparing the husband/wife relationship to Christ/church relationship. In teaching one relationship we are providing the basis of understanding the other.

So, what kind of a bridge are you building for the next generation? Just this last week a bridge collapsed in Taiwan leaving multiple fatalities. Such is tragic but the worse tragedy is not teaching our children by building a solid bridge between them and God. -- Dennis Tucker