

# Missing Generation

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon  
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> Sep 2010

## Intro-

- What age groups are missing here? What age groups are missing generally in churches in Wales?
- Every now and then a headline will really grab us. Recently E.A. magazine 'Idea' cover read 'Is the Church missing a generation?'. The magazine contained an article highlighting the problem of the drop in numbers of people in their 20's in church. God spoke to me through this. It is horrific when a whole generation is destroyed and leaves a community grieving. Such was the case in the mining disaster of the village of Aberfan. On 21 October 1966, a colliery spoil heap collapsed into homes and a school, killing 116 children and 28 adults. The shock brought the whole community to a standstill as they grieved a missing generation, and this shock went around the globe. However, can we, as God's Church in Wales, be missing a whole generation, but carrying on as if things are normal?
- This morning we will look at God's agenda and heart that all generations, not just some, be saved through the gospel and become essential members of His body, the Church. We will then look at how we can be a part of this becoming a reality.

**Read Eph 3:21; Psalm 78:1-7**

## God wants all generations in Church

- We are to believe for spiritual sons and daughters. The Bible calls us sons of Abraham. Abraham was one that dared to believe God could give him a son despite crazy circumstances. There is a promise over our lives should we choose to accept it. There is something of the spiritual inheritance of Abraham that we inherit as Christians- that our spiritual descendants, like the physical descendants of Abraham are to be as numerous as the stars and as the grains of sand. Jesus said He has chosen us to bear much fruit. The normal Christian life is one of fruitfulness. We are called to fruitfulness rather than barrenness, and so we are to have fruit from each successive generation as a continual harvest. This continual harvest is pictured by Amos in Amos 9:13- the plowman overtaking the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seeds- i.e. You haven't time to reap before it's time to sow for the following year.
- 'Brynmawr Family Church'- because Church is family. Church is for all generations, not just some. Children and young people are key to what God does. Children were affected by Jesus as he preached the gospel and healed the sick- children were healed and raised from the dead, children were blessed by Jesus and became the model for simple trust needed to enter the kingdom. Children recognised Jesus as Messiah and sang His praises after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt 21:15-16). In Matt 11:25 Jesus gets excited that wise and learned people can't grasp what God has revealed to little children. Sunday school and youth work can sometimes be perceived as a sentence on people, yet it is such a privilege and God moves powerfully in these groups when we let Him- e.g. In Stoneleigh Bible Week many healings and spiritual gifts amongst the youth and children's meetings.
- There is a baton to be passed on- Ps 145:4 'One generation shall praise Your works to another And shall declare Your mighty acts'. We have a baton in our hands- will we take it to the grave or will we pass it on? You are only as good as the people who you leave behind. It is of little worth if one generation is blessed but fails

to pass the baton onto the next- revival and growth can quickly come to a standstill.

### **Only a giving people will reach all generations- Ps 71:17-18**

- The Psalmist acknowledges the privilege of having known God since his youth. He then pleads with God not to take his life until he has truly seen young people from the next generation touched. This is the calibre of someone who will see fruit from the succeeding generations- a thankful, giving spirit.
- Our consumer culture has warped society. Instant gratification, 'I deserve it' ('because you're worth it'). Fear of commitment in case something better comes along. Mike Pilavachi:  
'The culture of consumerism, individualism and entitlement ... I believe is eating into the psyche of many 20-somethings. It's incompatible with commitment to community, because if you're in this culture it's all about you and what you receive. It can lead people to struggle with commitment to the key areas of their lives: relationships, careers and church. Often, this stems from a huge fear of getting involved with something in case it's the wrong thing, or in case something better comes along at a later date'.
- The consumer culture gets into the church. People think the church is primarily about them and their ministry development. They think that if things are too much geared toward the children or the youth they will miss out on some growth experience and their needs will not be met. However, ministry development happens as we serve, because ministry means service. There needs to be a shift in our thinking if we are to see the next generation won for Jesus. Jesus said 'it's more blessed to give than to receive'. A generation in bondage to consumerism can only be reached by a people released from the 'its all about me' philosophy and embracing a giving mentality.
- Often we can think 'its the youthworkers job' or 'it's the sunday school teachers job'. However, we all have a call to serve the generations that follow us in some way. For some that will mean youthwork. For others it will mean prayer support. For others it will mean financial support. For others it will mean not complaining when there is a meeting geared towards children or youth. For those working with children it means undergoing a police check so that a safe environment is assured to the children. For those barred from working with children it means a transparency and willingness to be accountable and to not have any contact with children. We all have a part to play for the welfare of the next generation.
- Young people know when they are not welcome, and they don't return. I have been in evangelistic meetings where young people turn up and the older people start getting 'twitchy'. I have also been in meetings where resources owned by older people would not be shared with younger people due to fears of damage. I have also found it extremely difficult to find a venue for the young people to meet in due to fears from the older generation. The fact is, we have all been young and received many privileges ourselves, isn't it time we started repaying by sowing into the next generations also?

### **We are to become spiritual parents- Deut 6:1-9; 2Tim 1:2-5**

- Israel was to focus on teaching the next generation what God had done and what God said. Moses recounted in Deuteronomy the laws given to their parents on Sinai and also the wonders God did. They in turn were to teach their kids. Those with children, how are you doing at teaching your children the Bible, how to live for God, how to hear from God, the miracles God has done etc.? Do you know your Bible well enough to teach others? Do you know the main stories in the Bible? Can you show someone from the Bible how to be saved?
- Fathering/mothering/role-models. Jesus had His Father as His role model 'I only do what I see the Father doing'. We have a generation of kids who 'only do what they see their parents doing'. It only takes one generation to not be living the life at home and the kids will live out of what they see really happening rather than the sham put

on for others at church. Wales called the 'land of my fathers' but there are few real fathers. If young people were to follow your example would they truly be spiritually on fire? Are you a good example to follow? Are you on fire for Jesus? Paul said 'follow me as I follow Christ' 1Cor 11:1; and in Hebrews 13:7 it says 'Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.' If someone was truly to follow you, would you be a good role-model? We can be praying for revival in this nation, when what we need is to be revived ourselves.

- Paul was a spiritual father to Timothy and called him 'my true son in the faith' and a 'beloved son'. Who are you being a spiritual father or mother to? Paul explained the baton being passed down to Timothy's mother Eunice from her mother, Lois. Eunice then passed it on to Timothy. Now Paul was encouraging Timothy to be bold and become a spiritual parent to others passing on the baton. Boldness is a key ingredient to being able to pass on the baton- we need to stir ourselves up!

What does it look like when the next generation are touched by the gospel?

- **A History of the American college campuses revival of 1992-1995:**  
On January 22, 1995, at Coggin Avenue Baptist Church in Brownwood, Texas, two students from Howard Payne University, a Christian institution, stood up and confessed their sins. As a result of this incident, many others started to confess their own sins before the congregation. On January 26, a similar event took place on the campus of Howard Payne. Word quickly spread to other colleges, and Howard Payne students were soon being invited to other college campuses, which experienced similar revivals. From these schools, more students were invited to still other schools, where there were further revivals. One of the first two students from Howard Payne to confess his sins was Chris Robeson. As he testified about his own life and the spiritual condition of his classmates, "People just started streaming down the aisles" in order to pray, confess their sins, and restore seemingly doomed relationships, according to John Avant, pastor of Coggin Avenue Baptist Church. From this time forward, the church began holding three-and-a-half-hour services. Avant said, "This is not something we're trying to manufacture. It's the most wonderful thing we've ever experienced"
- On March 1, 1995 John Avant spoke to an overflow crowd at Southwestern Baptist's Truett Auditorium about the events at Brownwood, resulting in seven hours of confession and prayer by students, faculty, and administrators. Students said that there was "an outpouring of healing, purging and cleansing among students, faculty, staff and administrators". Avant said the he witnessed deep, gut-level and spontaneous confessions of sins. "I saw a lot of brokenness and some genuine healing," he said. "I was amazed by the comradery among the students. Someone would share and immediately five or six people would stand around them and pray. One of the most moving experiences was when a white man admitted racism and two or three black guys almost carried him off the stage hugging him" Southwestern student Bobby Miller was surprised at the wide range of sins confessed by his fellow seminarians. "It's scary because most of them are prominent leaders of churches. Their confessions made me realize how much more I've got to have my act together".
- At Wheaton College, 1995 some students from Howard Payne University, James Hahn and Brandi Maguire, gave their testimonies at a weekly meeting of the World Christian Fellowship at Pierce Chapel on March 19 that lasted from 7:30 pm to 6 am the following day, when the custodial staff asked the remaining 400 people (of a total of 900) to leave so that the building could be cleaned. During that meeting, after each student spoke, friends gathered around to embrace and pray for him or her. Five large garbage bags were filled with bottles of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, pornography, and secular music. Subsequent meetings were moved to College Church at Wheaton to facilitate the larger crowds (of about 1800). Steve Snediker, wrote on March 25, "This thing has been almost entirely student led -- there were lines and lines of people engaged in confession and restitution. Loads of pornography, alcohol, cigarettes, ungodly CDs and tapes were being brought to the meetings as part of the confession. And people were coming forward to receive salvation in Christ.... It has been affecting more than just the students on campus. Young people from area churches have been attending. Because the meetings had officially been ended, at least one group of young people continued to meet at their own church last night (Friday) for prayer."
- **Pearl River High School revival of 7<sup>th</sup> June 2000:**  
Football players wept in the gym. Teenagers took the microphone, haltingly confessing their personal demons and begging for friends' prayers. Students in corridors cried on one another's shoulders. In an unusual outbreak of fervor, the regular class schedule at Pearl River Central High School in Mississippi broke down one day recently as teachers and administrators at first watched, then joined students in expressions of faith, personal testimonies and prayer in a student Bible club meeting that lasted four hours. Since that day, news of the "Pearl River Revival" has been spreading on Christian radio and Web sites, where it is being noted approvingly as a supernatural event--and a welcome example of a public school's hospitality to Christianity. Meanwhile, hundreds of congratulatory e-mails have formed a pile four inches thick on the desk of Principal Lolita Lee, who suspended classes April 12, the day a late-morning program by Pearl River's Christian students mushroomed into a daylong, schoolwide camp meeting. "I think this was a message from God that we need to put God back in our schools," said Judy Mitchell, one of the Bible club's faculty supervisors. "That's how I understood it, and that's become my goal."

- We have a vision to reach the youth of Brynmawr, starting with the 11-14's. Please can you prayer for this and consider whether God would have you contribute financially towards this, or help in some other way. We already have a great team of volunteers- please pray for them to be encouraged.
- We have a wonderful Sunday School team. Please pray for them to be strengthened. Ask God if He would have you contribute in some way.
- Maybe God is speaking to you about younger children- creche, or older youth, young adults, those in their 20's, supporting Christians in college etc. Maybe it is a calling for the future. Get ready and do the necessary groundwork.

### **Summary**

- God wants all generations in Church
- Only a giving people will reach all generations
- We are to become spiritual parents

**Songs:** *Take us to the river. There's a call to the people of zion.*