

“Thank God, There Are So Many Old People in the Church!”

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How do the world and the Bible differ in their respect for the elderly?

- “The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness.” (Pr 16:31)
- “The glory of young men is their strength, and the splendor of old men is their gray head.” (Pr 20:29)
- Rehoboam foolishly neglected the advice of his elders (his father Solomon’s advisors) and instead followed the wicked influence of the 40ish-year-old “young men” of his own generation. (1 Kgs 12)

A Few Foundational Principles

- **God’s design for the church:** “where the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered” (AC VII); see Mt 28:19–20; Jn 20:22–23; 1 Co 11:23–26; etc.
- **God’s design for the family:** Marriage is the divinely established (Gen 2:18) life-long union (Mt 19:4–6) celebrating sexual complementarity (Gen 1:27), children (Gen 1:28), and chastity (Gen 2:25); as a sanctified vocation, marriage reflects Christ’s love for the church (Eph 5:25–27).
- **Vocation:** “how your station in life serves as a channel of God’s blessings to the people around you,” that is, how *God* works through the office of father or mother or pastor or ... *through you!*

Child-Centered Ministry: Well-Intended, But Misaligned

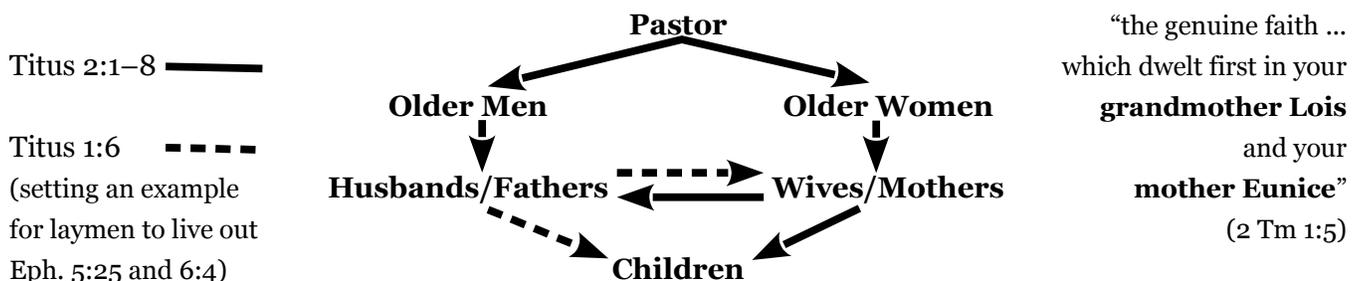
(“How Are Statistics Helpful to the Church (and How Are They Not)?,” www.intoyourhandsllc.com/blog/145)

- Across denominations, we’ve witnessed a tremendous surge in child-centered ministries (VBS, camps, preschools, youth ministries, contemporary worship styles, etc.) over the past 25 years.
- Ironically, these growth-seeking approaches have largely failed to deliver growth:
 - LCMS now has more preschoolers than K–12 combined, but child baptisms and youth confirmations continue to decline. WELS and ELS have similar trends.
 - Fewer than 45% of baptized children are still in church at confirmation time.
- Might the child-focus be the case of a good intention aimed at the wrong target?
 - Long before the child is old enough to get excited about a vibrant youth group, over 55% of parents already have decided to leave the congregation. (Having a Lutheran elementary school provides only a tiny statistical boost to the retention of children in the congregation.)
 - Stats consistently reveal that Dad’s participation is the #1 predictor of a child’s continuation in congregational life. *What do our congregations offer to Dad? (or to Grandpa ... to help Dad?)*

Parent- and Grandparent-Centered Ministry: The “Titus 2” Model

(“Inter-generational Ministry: Where Are You in Titus Chapter Two?,” www.hausvater.org/articles)

Pastors preach sermons (Titus 1:9) and laypeople live sermons (Titus 2:1–8; cf. Rom. 12:1) ... together cherishing the marks of the church as their vocations link the congregation to the home through spiritual mentoring relationships. So, where has God placed *you* in Titus 2?



- General Context:
 - Titus 1: The Need for Pastors and the Qualifications for Pastors
 - Titus 2: Mentoring the Laity for Their Specific Vocations
- Titus 2:1–8: “Speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine ... ” (v. 1)
 - **A: Train Older Men:** “that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience” (v. 2)
 - **B: Train Older Women:** “the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things” (v. 3)
 - **B’: Who Shall Train Younger Women:** “that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands” (v. 5a)
 - **“THAT THE WORD OF GOD MAY NOT BE BLASPHEMED.”** (v. 5b)
 - **A’: Train Younger Men:** “Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned.” (vv. 7–8)
- Three indications that Paul’s main point was v. 5b:
 - *Context:* False doctrine/blasphemy in chap. 1 was to be corrected by pastors preaching sound doctrine and by laity serving as living testimonies of who God really is.
 - *Greek grammar:* *hina* (“in order that,” “for the purpose of”) introduces the main point.
 - *Hebrew poetic form:* Like many NT writers, Paul employs an OT “chiastic” style in which the subpoints are echoed symmetrically and the main point is just past the center. The Western (Greco-Roman) approach emphasizes the main point at the beginning and end, but the Near Eastern (Hebrew) approach is like a sandwich: the meat is in the middle. (See Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*.)

Genesis 3

- A: Adam is accused
 - B: Eve is accused
 - C: Satan is accused
 - C’: Satan is judged
- THE SAVIOR
IS PROMISED
- B’: Eve is judged
- A’: Adam is judged

Luke 5

- A: a paralytic man is carried
 - B: healing is requested
 - C: forgiveness is proclaimed
 - C’: forgiveness is doubted
 - “THE SON OF MAN HAS POWER
ON EARTH TO FORGIVE”
 - B’: healing is granted
 - A’: a formerly paralyzed man walks
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How can the older generation mentor the middle and younger generations?

- Intergenerational men’s / women’s Bible studies (making “youth group” intergenerational, too?)
- One-on-one mentoring (taking a walk, going out for coffee, pairing “grandmas” with young girls)
- Adult-centered evangelistic outreach (rather than “VBS for kids and hope the parents come, too”)
- Your ideas? (*Discuss.*)

How can the middle and younger generations serve the older generation?

- Christmas caroling at nursing homes (distributing homemade, Gospel-centered cards)
- Youth group or families visiting shut-ins, volunteering to assist with yard work, etc.
- Your ideas? (*Discuss.*)