

HONORING GENERATIONS +++

PASTOR ZACH ZEHNDER

Well, good morning, King of Kings. Excited to bring the final sermon in this Honor Code series to you, and we're going to jump right into it. I'm going to put a chart up of a generational chart so you can see kind of what all the generations have been for well over a hundred years. When you see yourself, we're going to go through each one in just a moment. When you hear yourself being talked about, I would ask you at all of our campuses to just kind of act like the way you want to act, to represent your generation, if you will, if that makes sense.

So, we'll go through them. Some of you are already ready. I know what generation that is—that's boomers or millennials already ready to go. So let's start all the way at the beginning with the Lost Generation. You were born between 1883 and 1900. Is there anyone at any of our campuses? I just wanted to double check because if there was, that'd be newsworthy. Okay, not seeing that.

All right, let's go to what a name—the Greatest Generation, anyone 1901 to 1927 maybe not attending, but you might know one or two in your family or network, right? They're coming up just on a hundred years. The youngest one in that generation survived the Great Depression. They fought in World War II. They fixed everything with duct tape and a little elbow grease. They worked hard and used handkerchiefs and they loved their Coca-Cola and drove their Fords.

All right, let's move on to the Silent Generation. Anyone? Other people gotta call them out—they're so quiet. They lived in post-war recovery. They valued savings. They wrote in cursive and expect you still to be able to read it today. They listened to vinyls before it was cool. They didn't speak out much unless they were correcting your bad grammar or talking about how you should use real butter, not margarine. They shopped at Sears and loved their brand new washing machines.

Next generation is the Baby Boomers, probably a proud group of people. They grew up during prosperity, endured Woodstock and Vietnam, and invented the suburbs. They still use voicemail and are still hanging on to double spacing after periods. If you didn't know, that was retired about 25 years ago. But anyway, they ate their McDonald's, drove their Chevys, and wore their Levi's. Interestingly, they're the ones that invented rock and roll, blasted it in their station wagons, and now complain that it's too loud.

Next is Generation X—and hey, on all campuses. Nice. That was a little more than I thought you would say for yourself, but y'all grew up as latchkey kids. You wore your Nikes wanting to be like Mike, listened or watched Nirvana on MTV or maybe on your brand new Sony Walkman. You were the first to go on the digital Oregon Trail until your whole family died of dysentery. You still own DVDs and think they might come back, and watched your Sunday morning cartoons while eating Pop-Tarts.

Next we have the Millennials. We are described as digital natives. We grew up with AOL and graduated to Netflix. We love Kobe Bryant and our avocado toast, and we hate talking on the phone. We want purpose, not just a paycheck, and we made coffee an identity, an experience, not just a drink. We've

been called entitled, but in reality, why wouldn't you want to work from home in a hammock with Wi-Fi and have a boss who's a friend and a therapist?

We have a Gen Z in the house today. This generation grew up fully online. They text in lowercase only using vowels. If they use punctuation, it's considered aggressive. They've never used a phone with a cord or a map that folds or a sentence with vowels, but they can start a movement with a meme, so respect. They aren't afraid to order cheap stuff from Temu—that's actually how it's pronounced—and they look at Mr. Beast as the ultimate icon.

Any Generation Alpha? I hear a few here. They learn how to use an iPad before they potty train. Raised mostly by millennial parents, they're also being raised by Blippi, Bluey, and Ryan from Ryan's World. They know how to skip ads before they learn how to read, and while they may never know the pain of having to rewind a VHS tape, they can hack your smart fridge and order ice cream by command.

Isn't it crazy how different we are? It's wild when you think about it. Every generation has differences, things that mark your generation, brands that thrive for one don't for another, icons that will forever be cemented in one time period may be relatively unknown or uninteresting to the next. And yet, in every generation, not every generalization that I just gave is true.

In fact, I'm a millennial, and there are things that my generation is known for that I'm not. I've actually never had avocado toast, and I like avocado when I like toast. I just don't like going to a restaurant and paying the same price for avocado toast when I can get eggs, bacon, sausage, hash browns, bread, drink, and a \$25 gift card for the same price. It's a value thing for me. And while my generation made coffee an experience, I don't drink coffee. I know, I'm an outlier to my generation, just like you're an outlier to your generation. Not every generalization about your generation is true for you.

And that's my main point: generations are different from one another, just as every single person is different from one another. And that's what makes us unique, and I think that's what brings a little bit of fun and spice to life. And yet, in the middle of all that, God calls us to honor one another, even when we're a different age or generation. But rather than honoring and celebrating the uniqueness and difference that we might be from one another, my cultural analysis here—I do not think generations treat one another kindly. I don't think we treat one another with respect and honor first. I think we tear down more than we build up, and that's a problem to solve.

And what I hope this sermon, maybe in a little bit of a way, can bring an answer to that: How do we honor and respect different generations? As I said, we're finishing up our final series in this Honor Code series. We're calling Christians to live with honor. The definition we've been using is pursuing a good reputation and showing proper respect for others.

We've looked at how to honor God first and foremost, how to honor authority even when authority is different than you, and last week on Father's Day, how to show honor in the homes. All of those messages are available on our website and in our app if you missed one. But today what I want to do is I want to share two things that older generations can do for younger generations, and two things that younger generations can do for older generations. And I think if we get this right, we're going to be well on our way to honoring one another, which in the end honors God.

And so to do this, we're going to jump into a relationship between David, the king of Israel, and his son Solomon. We're going to start by looking at 1 Chronicles chapter 22. And if you know your Bible, you'll know that Chronicles is by some voted the most boring book in the Bible. So a little side challenge for me is I'm going to prove to you today that the Bible ain't boring. So we're going to get into it.

And as I share these things with you, recognize I say these as like a 41, almost 42-year-old guy that's kind of squarely in the middle of these generations. So everything I'm saying, all four of these apply to me. By the way, if you're one or 91, you've got people younger and older than you, just so you know. So all four of these apply, though two of them may stand out a little bit more based on your age and generation than the other two.

All right, number one for older generations: what we can do for younger is you can push past your preferences to propel—that's a lot of Ps—the next generation. King David, he was an incredible king of Israel. We're praying for Israel today, and they were still fighting for peace back then. David was unlike most kings where he actually attained peace in the nation of Israel some 2,500 years ago. And so he's at peace and he has this desire to finally build God a temple in Israel.

In the Old Testament, they built the tabernacle for when they were in the wilderness, but now they'd actually been settled in Israel in the promised land for more than 400 years. And they were still using the tabernacle, which was meant to be a moving place of worship for God. David's desire was to put down roots and to really give God the temple and the house of worship that is due for a God as great as he is.

He had this preference, yet he was told by an angel not to do this. First Chronicles chapter 22, starting in verse six: Then he, David, called for his son Solomon and charged him to build a house for the Lord, the God of Israel. David said to Solomon, "My son, I had it in my heart to build a house for the name of the Lord, my God. But the word of the Lord came to me that you've shed much blood and you fought many wars. You're not to build a house for my name because you've shed much blood on the earth in my sight. But you will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign.

"He is the one who will build a house for my name. He will be my son, and I will be his father, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever."

David wanted to build God a temple, a beautiful thing. It was his preference to do that, and an angel told him not to. What we're going to see in just a moment is David, who could have been frustrated by this and sidelined by this, actually then began to pour all of his energy to set up his son Solomon to do what he could not. He gathered materials and finances, lined up the skilled workers, and laid the foundation for a future that he wouldn't do himself. It's pretty awesome.

Older generations, one of the most honorable things you can do is to prepare the way by laying a foundation for those that are younger than you: to share your wisdom, pass the baton of your faith, and give them tools, resources, and encouragement. Your legacy isn't just in what you build for yourself, but often what you leave in motion behind you for others.

David wanted to build the temple, but he let his son do it. Sometimes the most honorable thing you can do, older generations, is to lay aside your own preferences in order to best propel and reach the next generation.

That's why, as we think about who King of Kings is as a church, we want and desire our church to be a multi-generational church that reaches new people and also increases the quality of Christians, of disciples that are coming out of this church. Our big goal coming into 2025, we're going to do a lot of things, but we're going to do one thing really well: we want to make sure we get our third campus, Fremont, launched as well as possible.

We believe in the multi-campus strategy. We look at the data and the statistics and the stories that come from it and say that collectively there's no greater way to reach new people for Jesus in our nation today than by planting churches or opening campuses.

One of our jobs as a church is to continue to reach new people so that the kingdom of heaven would be bigger. By God's grace, things are going really well in Fremont. We haven't even publicly relaunched yet—that's going to be on September 7th—and we're already seeing more than a hundred people every single Sunday the last six, seven, eight weeks. Can you praise God for that? So things are in motion. God is doing great things.

Now we're starting to look at, "Awesome. Now that that's in a place where we feel like it's going in a really great direction, what's our next big plan? The one big thing that in 2026 we're going to work towards."

As we talked about it and met, we said if we do nothing else, the thing we want to pour into in 2026 is to propel our next generation ministries at all of our campuses. We want our kids and our students to be strong in their faith. We will do what we need to do because as it's important to increase the quantity of people through the multi-campus strategy, it's also really important that each of our campuses still is producing highly quality disciples of Jesus from little on up.

We need your help with this, church. Not only do we need your help, but the younger generation needs your help—and I would say you need it too because it's so fulfilling and rewarding.

Some of you are like, "I don't know. I feel a little stale in my life. I feel a little insignificant." If you want to do something that's fulfilling and rewarding and will take you out of your comfort zone—which is a good thing, by the way, to do that regularly—invest in the lives of students. You may not feel like you're cool enough. You maybe don't feel like you can relate. You may still text with periods and maybe even double space after it. It's all good. No cap. They need you, and you need them. I believe we're going to be stronger together.

So the question to ask is: what preference is God calling you to lay aside in order to greater propel those younger than you?

David, the king man, he's got a list of great accomplishments in the Bible. I don't think many would put the passing of the torch to Solomon at the top of the list, but I would. That's legacy that's moving on. He not only let Solomon do it, but he set Solomon up to do it super well, even when it cost him.

Here's what it says in verse 14:

"I have taken great pains to provide for the temple of the Lord. Listen to this amount of money: a hundred thousand talents of gold, a million talents of silver, quantities of bronze and iron too great to be weighed, wooden and stone. And you may add to them. You also have many workers: stone cutters, masons, carpenters, as well as those skilled in every kind of work in gold and silver, bronze and iron craftsmen beyond number. Now begin the work and the Lord be with you."

Then David ordered all the leaders of Israel to help his son, Solomon. He said to them, "Isn't the Lord your God with you? And hasn't He granted you rest on every side? He has given you the inhabitants of the land into my hands, and the land is subject to the Lord and His people. Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the Lord your God. Begin to build the sanctuary of the Lord God, so that you may bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the sacred articles belonging to God into the temple that would be built for the name of the Lord."

It means that older generations, you need not only to have a vision big enough and godly enough to pass on, but if you're doing it well, you don't just have the vision, but you're going to do everything in your power to set the next generation up so that they can take this forward.

I'm not saying, especially as you age and get even older, that it's wrong to retire and relax and rest and have days where you eat, drink, marry, and play golf—like fine.

But there are days in David's late life that he is painstakingly working for the sake of the next generation. Do you have that in your life?

A couple of years ago, when I was writing the book *Serving Challenge*, I really investigated how Jesus served us—you and me and the disciples in that day. And I noticed that there were so many times where Jesus would lay aside His preference, His agenda, His time in order to meet the person in front of Him, to elevate them and to help them accomplish their God-sized dream.

I found through that, that that's really my calling as a dad, as a parent, as someone who is older. Am I doing everything I can in my role to set up those that I love, especially my kids, so that they can accomplish their God-sized dream? Even if my God-sized dream for myself has to be laid aside, put aside, set aside, am I doing what I can to set them up so that they can accomplish theirs? I don't do it right all the time, but I'm trying to be more cognizant of if I'm going to err on the side of one thing, I'm going to let my dream go for now in these formative years for them so that their dreams can be realized. I will do everything humanly, and I would also add the word legally possible, so that they have all the resources, all the belief, and vision from their dad to get what they need done, done.

Second thing older can do for younger, David did for Solomon: speak life and courage.

I skipped three verses in the narrative where David addresses his son Solomon.

He said:

"Now my son, the Lord be with you and may you have success and build the house of the Lord your God as He said you would. May the Lord give you discretion and understanding when He puts you in

command over Israel so that you may keep the law of the Lord your God. Then you will have success if you are careful to observe the decrees and laws that the Lord gave Moses for Israel. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged. Son, you've got the Lord with you. You've got the supplies and the people. Be strong, be courageous. Son, you've got this. God is with you. You've got this."

He didn't diminish Solomon's inexperience. He lifted his eyes towards God's strength and the resources around him, and his words carry weight.

As older generations, your words carry weight. How dare we who are older ever belittle the next generation and fail to bless them? Sometimes because we don't understand, we can say words that are harmful when God is calling us as older generations to remind them to look to God's strength and to call out the potential in and around them, to speak up for them and to speak courage to them in a time when many young leaders are feeling fear at levels that we didn't feel when we were their age.

It's really hard. I've said this before: If you don't think about it, it's really hard to be a young generation today—to be Gen Z and Gen Alpha and whatever comes after that, I think it's Gen Beta.

Gen Z specifically is really challenging. They grew up with more family brokenness than ever before, less church attendance than ever before, in a time where things are more confusing than they've ever been before.

There is racial diversity, sexual diversity, theological diversity, confusion with immigration and the environment, and issues of women and gender identity and LGBTQIA+ rights. How do we do this?

This generation has grown up with a mass school shooting at least once a year every year of their life. That is not normal and should never be normal.

Add to that the rapid increase that technology is bringing: this new thing called artificial intelligence that we didn't have to deal with when we were their age, and throw in a worldwide pandemic that shut the world down for months to years.

It's no wonder that they're described as the loneliest generation ever, and that many of them, especially females, are checking in at the same anxiety levels that were psychiatric patients in the fifties.

So we want to come on top of that and discourage them or make them feel like they don't have what it takes? Are you kidding me? No. We have to speak life and courage to them.

In spite of all of that, Gen Z is doing some great things—praise God. There have been faith metrics that have been going down for decades that all of a sudden are turning positive by a little bit. It's just a little bit in darkness, but it's good things.

Young adults are more spiritually engaged than any other living generation. Bible reading is up. Gen Z, particularly men, are coming back to church in higher percentages than we've ever seen in decades.

This generation, the younger they get, are more producers, not consumers. They love experience and challenge. They volunteer regularly. They stand up against injustice. They're super smart, savvy, creative. Many want to be entrepreneurs and do new things in this world to accomplish God's dreams.

So why in the world would we ever, ever, ever want to be negative or cut them down? It's our role to fight for them and lift them up, especially with our words, because your words matter.

Sadie Robertson Huff, a young leader, says, "When we are a generation that honors, encourages, and lifts each other up—old and young—we don't just carry the gospel, we multiply it."

That's what it's all about—carrying the gospel across generations.

A book that I read as a young dad was by John Eldredge, specifically for fathers to sons. There's a five-word phrase that he said is the most important words your son hears you say as a dad, but I believe this crosses generations too: "You have what it takes."

We believe in you.

The best way to raise them up is not to suppress the evil, but to elevate the good in them.

Do you know that the younger generations are drinking less, smoking less, and having less sex than we did in our generations? It's time to build them up.

What if rather than thinking about "don't date," we can get them thinking about smuggling Bibles into foreign countries, or better yet, using artificial intelligence to speed up Bible translation across the world by more than a decade?

What if rather than telling them "don't drink," we can get them thinking about building wells of water to those across the world that don't have it?

Speaking of which, I was talking with a Gen Zer earlier today, serving on a worship team, that's sore from training for a half marathon later this year because she's running to collect water for wells with World Vision, like many at King of Kings across our campuses are doing on September 28th this year. How cool!

So we can lay aside our preferences and speak life and courage.

Now, let me flip it.

Younger generations, two things you can do for older generations:

Number one, stop wasting your money on DoorDash. Super annoying, a ripoff, and the fees are stupid. I mean, I know they say "no delivery fee," but look, there's \$10 of other fees for every \$5 you spent. Get in your car, drive it, and pick it up. Or better yet, learn to cook at home.

Anyway, alright, that's not really my advice, except it kind of is because the real number one is: receive their wisdom.

And I just dropped some wisdom for you, by the way.

As a dad with two teenagers, I get it. Believe it or not, when I was a teenager, just like when you were a teenager, just like when they are teenagers, there's a certain thing that they think they know. Certain thing that I once thought I knew as a teenager.

You want to know what it is? Oh, some people are saying it out loud. Everything.

Yeah. You don't know everything.

And by the way, the older you get, the more you realize that you didn't know everything, even though you might know more now as you age.

I don't know what it is, but there's something resistant about teenagers listening to their parents, their grandparents, and those that love them, that even if they have really good ideas, the first word that often comes out of a teenager's mouth is no.

So let me just tell you something that's true:

With age, with experience, life experience comes wisdom.

So we do believe in you, but we also ask you to believe in us.

Here's a great verse that I think is so awesome with this, and it's written by Solomon, David's son:

"The glory of young men is their strength; gray hair is the splendor of the old."

(Some translations say beauty of the old. Some of you are really beautiful, by the way.)

Gray hair is symbolic of not just old, but wise.

Younger generations, you've got the strength, you've got the endurance, you've got the possibilities and the opportunities.

But older generations, we've got the gray hair, we've got the wisdom, the understanding, and I really believe that when we bring this together, we can do so much more together.

Younger generations, it would be really wise if you had someone older that you listen to, ask questions of, and stay curious with.

Here's what I love about the story of David and Solomon: Solomon could have brushed off David's hard work and his gift. He could have said, "Dad," rolled his eyes, "like that temple idea is so boomer of you, Dad—that's your generation, not mine."

But he didn't. He received it with humility and began the work. The temple of God was built, and something that no person and no father-son duo for 500 years was able to accomplish was accomplished by these two guys. It's a legacy right there.

Younger, you don't have to agree with every method of the older generations. It might be slower and less digital than the way you would do it. But the heart behind what they're saying—it's really honoring. It's worth honoring.

Solomon built something great largely because he received this God-sized dream and he took it to the next level. And by doing so, not only was God blessed, but if you look at Solomon's life, he was ridiculously blessed from an earthly perspective. If you look at his riches and everything that he had, he makes our guy in Nebraska, Warren Buffett, look poor.

And speaking of wealth, number two: younger to older, I think you ought to express your gratitude and your grace.

The reality is that right now, we are in the beginning stages of the single most significant transfer of wealth that our world has ever seen. It's called the Great Wealth Transfer.

In the next 20 years, there will be somewhere close to \$84 trillion—TR at the beginning—passed on in America from largely boomers and some in the silent generation to those in younger generations.

Can I be real with you? Every one of those dollars was earned, and they are now being passed into the next generations because the previous generation—your father, your grandfather, your great grandfather—I don't know your aunt, your uncle—because someone had a really great work ethic and also had really wise financial stewardship that not only provided for their family—and some didn't have anything to start with—but they provided for their family and somehow saved up enough that now it's being passed on to supply, be supplied to you and future generations, kids and grandkids.

I think that's an incredible sacrifice.

And one of the words that I think is missing most is simply these two words: Thank you.

It doesn't have to be thank you for these big, bold things like after someone dies and then it gets passed on to you—don't wait that long. It can be something small when someone older believes in you, says something nice about you, takes you to dinner or invites you to an experience that you would have otherwise not had.

Thank you.

So nice.

I can just say, for being in the middle of these generations, it's so nice to have someone younger say thank you rather than simply receiving it because it's yours or because you share the same last name.

Show gratitude and maybe ask what it was like when they were growing up, and maybe try not to roll your eyes as they talk about it—the good old days.

Learn what shaped your parents, mentors, or grandparents. It might help you more than you think.

Having said all of that, no generation is perfect. I recognize this again: The more I age, I think I get more wisdom to know that probably as a child, I placed too many expectations on my parents to be perfect and on the older generations to have their life put together. That's simply just not true.

What you will be in 10 years, 20 years, and 70 years from now is you will still be a sinner. And while God has taken care of our eternal consequences with sin through Jesus, there are still earthly consequences.

Some of you may be passing on good—the great wealth transfer—onto family and legacy. But some of you may be passing bad—the great sin consequence transfer—that somehow goes through families and generations and legacies.

I think you need to hear these words from us who have failed you, called older people chronologically superior by my friend Grant Skelton.

What you need to hear from those who are chronologically superior is: I'm sorry.

And what we'd love to hear back is: I forgive you.

When you express gratitude, thank you.

And when you express grace, I forgive you.

Gosh, when we do this across generations, it's a really beautiful thing.

David and Solomon built God's temple, but we still today get to build God's kingdom.

David says these words in Psalm 145:

"Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise. His greatness no one can fathom.

One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts."

I want you to think about this.

Generations come and go.

Your life comes and goes.

But the word of the Lord stands forever.

There's no thing that you or your generation can do that is more significant than to tell the works of Jesus and pass the works of Jesus onto the next generation so that the gospel continues to spread further and further and further.

You will die, but God's word will remain forever.

You ought to feel important and significant because you can make a difference with the life you live, but you ought not to feel so important, so significant that you make life about you or your generation.

It's about building God's kingdom forever and ever.

So your call to action this week in all of our campuses, we have these honor cards.

I'd love for you to take one, two, or a stack of ten of these.

These cards just say: "Thank you for making a difference" or "You've made a difference in my life and I'm honoring you for that."

When someone makes a difference in your life, give them one of these cards.

Some of you, I think you should take it to the next level and schedule a meal or write a note or make a call this week to someone in a different generation and maybe even set up a mentor-mentee type relationship. It might just change your life.

On that note, I'd like to practice what I'm preaching.

I'd like to honor someone who's made a difference in my life.

This man has served on the King of Kings staff for 20 years, plus nine years of volunteering before that. Next Sunday is his last Sunday here on staff. He'll still be around. His name is Steve Roberts.

Steve has faithfully served on our worship team here at the Millard campus. Some of you know him well, some may not, but he's been amazing in my life.

Those first nine years of volunteering were years when my life intersected with the student ministry and my life was forever changed.

Steve volunteered his time at a Sunday night worship service for teenagers called Hearts of Fire, where my life was changed.

In the 20 years that I left King of Kings University Seminary and planting a church in Florida, when I would come back, there would be fewer and fewer people that I knew here at King of Kings.

But every time I came back to this home church, Steve Roberts was there to greet me and come out of his way to say hi, check in with me, and through his New Jersey sarcastic, dry sense of humor, somehow encourage me and speak life to me.

My life was changed by Steve Roberts.

I thank you for believing in me, Steve. You have no idea.

Older people, you have no idea how important your words are to shape the life of someone who is younger.

It might just set them on a course that would change their life.

I want to not only honor Steve, but his wife, Terry Roberts. She has served 27 years as a volunteer in our kids ministry. This is a duo that gets it.

I want to invite you, church, to stand.

If we could get these four things right—oh man—if we could lay aside our preferences, if we could speak life and courage to one another, if we could receive wisdom from one another, and express gratitude and grace, we wouldn't just be a church of generations but one family that reflects God from age to age.

A church that I dream about and think about that may look a little bit like this: A church where a teenager leads worship while a grandparent is praying for them from the front row.

A church where a Gen Z tech volunteer—which here at our Millard campus, like 90% of them are Gen Z volunteers—but a church where a Gen Z tech volunteer helps a boomer navigate the app while that boomer teaches them how they prayed through the Psalms in a really difficult time of their life.

A church where disagreements don't divide but deepen our discipleship and where the gray-haired pass the torch and the young carry it higher and further.

A church where every generation knows you are important and you matter and where through it all the world might get a glimpse and say, "Surely God is among them."

Lord, let it be.

Jesus, that is our prayer— that your word would stand forever and that we would honor one another, pass on what you've given to us so that it can be even greater in the future.

We love you, Jesus.

And together, all campuses say, Amen.