

Polly's Pondering

Praise the LORD from heaven! Praise God on the heights! Do the same, you young men - young women too!- you who are old together with you who are young. Psalm 148:1 and 13

This is one of my favorite pictures. It is John's Dad's hands holding his Great Granddaughter, Cadie's hand. There is so much captured in the photo. You can see the evidence of a life well lived in the bent and aged hands of Herb. You can see the fresh new life just begun in the smooth unwrinkled small infant hands of Cadie. In this embrace you can see the connection of two generations and the embrace is not a mere passing. It is just the beginning of a meaningful relationship that bridges the gap between years.



In this modern world in which we live, where more and more families are geographically separated due to jobs and the like, this image is even more important. Fewer children are cared for by older family members and instead their care is outsourced. More and more aging populations are choosing to live in closed retirement communities (over 50 in which there are no families with children living). More families are working two jobs and longer hours making extended family or neighborhood get togethers a luxury rather than the norm.

And yet today churches are still one of the few natural intergenerational spaces. But even there we often separate things by age. Some churches even have Sunday School at the same time worship is happening, which sadly assures that the services will be less and less intergenerational.

But this is gathering of the family of faith in time and space with young and old is Biblical. "you who are old *together* with you who are young" that is what the Psalmist says. In Titus Chapter 2, we are called as older women and men to teach and train the younger generation. You can't do that without a connection, a relationship. 1 Timothy 4:12 tells the young to teach by example and not be put down by their youthful age. You see the scripture is clear we learn from one another. Our connection - our relationship with those who are not our own age matters. These relationships are the thread that keeps kids connected to church. It is the emotional connection that many ageing adults need during some of the loneliest and most isolating years. When these relationships are strong young and old feel at home in a gathering of any age. My own family has embraced this truth for a long time. Some of my own children's best friends are two generations older than them. And some of the most profound lessons in faith I have learned came from youth in the churches where I have served in ministry both as a professional and a volunteer. I still treasure the hands of a four-year-old placed upon my head at a local restaurant dinner table following a healing service where I had anointed and placed my hands upon those who came up for prayer. She looked directly into my eyes; the anointing oil still evidenced on her small bang covered forehead. Her sweet words have long been forgotten but not the power of the moment. I had been prayed for by one filled with compassion and modeling what she had learned through intergenerational worship where she was not deemed too young to participate. And when she said Amen, I agreed yes LORD, let it be so. Amen