

Here For Good 3.0

Here For Each Other – Multi-Generational

1. Family Matters.

- *Genesis 12:1-3; 17:1-7; 18:18-19; 24:1*

2. Church Family Matters.

- *1 Samuel 1:27*

3. Life Matters.

- *Hebrews 4:15*

West Valley Church
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Here For Good 3.0: Here For Each Other – Multi-Generational

Good morning everyone, my name is Casey, I'm the Children's Pastor here. I'm looking forward to sharing with you and hopefully challenge you as well as we continue our series: Here For Good 3.0. You've heard Pastor Mike use words during this series like "mortgage, ministry, multi-cultural, but here is another...multi-generational. It's important to know that our church is multi-generational because we believe...

Family matters.

Now that our church mortgage is paid off, money is being moved to ministries, including the Children's Department.

Some Here For Good money is going to be used to remodel some of our Children's Department areas to increase security.

Safety is important in our church (and not just for children) so we are going to be moving some kid spaces around and doing a few things differently to better utilize the space we have.

You've heard that we are making plans for Trunk or Treat at the end of the month, October 29, (12-2pm). This is a family event, but it's also multi-generational. We have all ages from the community come and bring their kids, grandkids, or great grandkids. As a church, we get to serve food, hand out candy, play games, pray for them, and help our community know that we care about them, that family matters, and that we are here for good.

Today we'll learn from three different people in the Bible, let's start by looking at the life of a man who was all about being multi-generational.

In fact, he is the father of multiple generations. Father Abraham. Abraham was on an adventure of faith which was also a multi-generational adventure. This adventure of faith was not simply for him just as your faith is not simply for you; faith is not just a personal thing as some people like to say. God did not design it that way, God designed faith to be infectious to spread primarily and most powerfully through the family tree from parent to child to grandchild to great grandchild. Let me read from Genesis 12, God's first mention of a promise to Abram.

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:1-3)

Abram's first step in becoming a great family, a great nation, is to leave his father's household. Interesting start don't you think? This is not about the past, but the future. You could argue that Abram was already blessed, he had land with his father, relatives, and probably wealth and animals. Over and over, God says, "I will". God is going to do this. Abram isn't going to get to take any credit. Everything that he is blessed with in the future, will be because of what God did. All Abram has to do is faithfully obey, and he does. Abram's positive response would involve enormous sacrifice. It would be very difficult for him to separate himself from all he had grown up knowing. He was 75 years old at this point, and God told him to leave all he knew so God could start over. Imagine starting over and leaving all you know.

This is a good reminder that God's blessings often come after we go through something difficult. And if you come from a home or workplace of pain, or anger, God's plans for your future is not hinged to your past experiences. Good can come from our past no matter how good or bad it was. Abram's faith in God helped him move out of his past, and your faith can help too.

Skip a few chapters and you see that Abram wonders if God is going to keep his promise; how is he going to become a great Nation? He doesn't have a kid. He's getting old, etc.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, as for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. (Genesis 17:1-7)

God changed his name to Abraham and then gives him some additional details of what this covenant is going to look like. God told him years ago that he was going to turn him into a great nation. But now God says, not a nation, but nations. The father of many nations. God then let Abraham know that this covenant, this promise he's making to Abraham, isn't just for Abraham. It's a promise to his son (who wasn't born yet) and his son, and his son, for many generations to come. A promise from God that is multi-generational. Abraham was 99 already, but God wasn't going to let his age keep him from being a blessing. Our age, doesn't have to keep us from being a blessing to others either. Now, our church is really great at providing opportunities for people to serve no matter what age you are. And if you think you are too young or too old, you're wrong.

This is a lot of pressure on one man. To be a father of nations and to have Kings come from him. To establish a covenant with God that effects descendants for generations to come, before a child has even been born. So thankfully chapter 18 gets a little more specific and narrows the focus down on what Abraham needs to do for now.

Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." (Genesis 18:18-19)

In verse 18 we see again the big picture of what God called Abraham to do. God wanted all nations on earth to be blessed through him. In verse 19 we find what God wanted Abraham to do as an individual to make the plan happen. His task was to direct his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord. His task was to teach them about the Lord and nurture faith in the hearts. That's the task of families. It's why family matters. And because Abraham was faithful with what God gave him, he was blessed.

Abraham was now very old, and the Lord had blessed him in every way.
(Genesis 24:1)

Abraham was blessed in every way; his children were blessed to go on and be a blessing to others. I know I want to help my children be a blessing to others. As a father, I want my children to see others the way God sees them. As a pastor, I want our church to see others the way God sees them.

Abraham teaches us that family matters. For our church to be multi-generational someone else can also teach us that...

Church family matters.

It was in the temple that Samuel learned to hear God's voice. In 1 Samuel, we read about Hannah praying for a son. She hadn't been able to have a child and so she tells God, if she has a baby, she'll give him back to Him to let him be raised at the temple, and learn to serve God.

I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him.
(1 Samuel 1:27)

(For this child I prayed) is a verse many parents learn early on in their pregnancy, it's a verse, Alyssa and I looked to when Jordan was born, after we had a miscarriage the year before. God answers her prayer, and she fulfills her promise and lets her son Samuel be raised by the priest Eli. So Samuel was raised by Eli, and Eli taught him Scripture, how to hear God's voice, and how to help others follow God's laws. Samuel was dedicated in the temple, and there are times we celebrate the different generations represented at church as well. I want to show you a few old pictures. Kayden Gott (with parents Terry and Jessica) and Elizabeth Fleming (with parents Robert and Molly) were dedicated about 10 years ago. In a baby dedication, the parents agree to do all they can to raise the baby learning to follow Jesus. But it's also a challenge to the church family. Here is what the pastor will typically say to the congregation:

I now ask you, the community of believers here at West Valley Church, will you commit yourself as the Body of Christ to support and encourage these parents as they endeavor to fulfill their responsibilities to their child, and to assist in nurturing the child's growth toward spiritual maturity? If so, answer, "We will".

So, when you agree and say “we will” you are accepting part of the responsibility in helping the family, supporting them, and being a blessing to them in whatever way God directs you. You’re also agreeing to volunteer in children’s ministry, just kidding. Maybe Pastor Mike could slip that in at the end. We challenge the congregation in a baby dedication because we believe the church family matters.

I learned a lot about how our church viewed family when we moved here ten years ago. Kids were always welcome in service (even if there was a kid’s church). When we first got here, our 10-year-old Judah was 4 months old. We were sitting in service with family while Judah was sleeping, and another baby started crying. I was curious to see what Pastor Mike would do. As a preacher, we know sometimes we need to speak louder to cover up a noise. He didn’t speak up, he stopped. And then looked at the crying baby being held by the mom, (I was nervous for what he was going to say). Our son, Judah, was sleeping in grandma’s arms and all I could think was (keep sleeping). The mom was holding the crying baby, headed for the door. And Pastor Mike said something like this, you’ve probably heard him say it before too, he said, “I want you to know that crying bothers you parents more than it bothers me and the others in this room. We are so glad you are here with us. Keep coming and keep bringing your baby to church.” I couldn’t have been prouder of our pastor. It was clear, he believed, family matters.

Church family matters not just in baby dedication, but in baptism. The next Baptism Service is October 30. The day after Trunk or Treat. Our church celebrates as a church family when lives are changed, and baptism represents, a life change. On a baptism Sunday, we’ll see many different ages of people get baptized, and each of them is a celebration of God’s faithfulness and the redeeming work of Jesus in their lives.

Samuel grew up in a temple, and many others are growing up part of this church, learning that they are loved, that they are valued, and that just like Samuel, they can be used by God at an early age. Church family matters not just on special Sundays, like baptism and dedications, but every Sunday. You can see multiple generations worshiping on Sundays and serving in many different ways, in the nursery, leading worship, helping with tech, greeting, and lots of other ways. So, if you think you are too young or too old, you’re wrong.

The last few weeks, as long as it wasn’t too hot, I’ve walked to church as often as possible, on Sundays and a few times during the week. It takes about 40 minutes and it’s a good start to my day as I think about what I need to do or just dream a little about the future. It’s an intentional way for me to slow myself down and spend some time talking to God. During the week, it’s the same path the kids take to school, so we walk together. Before we part, we pray for our day and ask for God’s help and to remind us of his loving presence. All of us are busy and have limited time in the day, but when it comes to being multi-generational, sharing our experiences, sharing our journey, sharing our...

Life matters.

Our greatest example in life is Jesus. How we love our family, how we love our church family, how we love everyone, the example is Jesus. I know Jesus is perfect, but let’s not think that because He was perfect, He couldn’t possibly know what we have to deal with.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.
(Hebrews 4:15)

He experienced pain, he experienced annoying family, or annoying church family. He experienced helping others and He knew how to bless those around Him. Our life matters because Jesus died for it. It's His life, that gives us our value.

Our church values the family, we value the church family, and we provide lots of ways to help families learn and grow. We do it all, so we can help all generations grow on their faith journey, because what we experience and learn together matters, it's part of life, and because of Jesus, how we live our life matters.

My kids have been growing up in this church and have been blessed to have two sets of grandparents in our church too. I know this isn't the case for many, and I also know the importance of having grandparent role models for kids (even if they aren't your actual grandparents). So last January we started what's called the "Buddy System".

Parents signed their kid up and then we found an adult buddy to pair the child with. Buddies commit to praying for each other during the week and connect on Sunday after service. Then we have a few activities during the year to invite buddies to come and connect with each other. It's not a big, huge program, it's just a little way to help kids and adults within our church to connect. If you have a kid, or you are an adult who wants a kid buddy, send me an email, or watch for sign-ups starting later this month. Our young adult ministry is doing something similar too. The young adult leaders identified a few people in our church who had already taken an interest in the young adults. So, our young adults have some adult mentors who have been coming some events and building deeper relationships with them in a very natural way. These kids, young adults, parents, and adults are all on a faith journey. In a relational way, we are providing opportunities to connect the different generations in our church, so they can journey through life together, because life matters. Here is a video of two families in our church who can tell you a thing or two about their faith journey together.

Why is it important to be multi-generational? Jesus taught his disciples to pray for heaven to come to earth. We'll experience love and peace, in amazing ways when we get to heaven, but as followers of Jesus, it's up to us to bring love and peace to those around us. We can't focus so much on the end that we lose sight of what matters now, family matters, church family matters, life matters. We are bringing the kingdom of God to earth. Being multi-generational means being here for each other. It means we recognize the value in others regardless of their age. We all have something to learn, and something to teach. Like I said earlier, whether you think you are too young or too old, your wrong.

Prayer