

An End-Times Promise for Every Serious Prayer Warrior

One clear end-time promise of God is Malachi 4:5-6, that God would send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord to restore the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers so that He would not have to strike the land with a curse. In a similar vein, the prophet Jeremiah spoke the following regarding Israel: "Then the virgin shall rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together, for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow" (Jer. 31:13). The best for God's people comes when the young and the old "dance" together in relationship, and especially in worship.

This being true, it should be obvious that the enemy of our soul would move to prevent God's prophesied generational connection from coming to pass. In our day, after a more than 40-year war cultural war on masculinity, we now face a generation of fatherless sons and daughters, wounded, abandoned and struggling to understand their identity. As a result, society deteriorates, and the effects of that broken connection extend to the church.

I remember a time, not so long ago, when congregations like mine were, for a lack of a better word, generationally integrated. Young and old worshiped together, enjoyed spiritual renewal together, took ministry team training together, ministered at the altars together, participated on prophetic ministry teams together and more, even while having separate weekday meetings where each generation could connect with peers for the unique kinds of fellowship each age group needed. Granted, this unity may not have been the case everywhere, but it was at least possible, and a number of us were making it happen.

In the midst of this, however, I began to witness a shift in a number of places around the nation and even in my own congregation. I began to hear talk about how we needed “youth churches” to reach the young, specialty congregations focused on youth as a group. It seemed as if older saints were deemed unable to connect, as though the church could not reach the coming generation without creating independent entities. Distance developed in direct contradiction of God’s call in Deuteronomy 6 that “you, your son and your grandson” would serve the Lord. Deuteronomy 6 implied the kind of generational connection in relationship that would enable the passing on of a legacy of faith, “that you may live long in the earth.” God doesn’t change. Neither does His vision, and this one comes with a promise of blessing.

Having come of age in the era of the Jesus Movement in the early 1970s, I lived through a time when the older generation expected us to learn to like what they liked: singing old hymns from handheld hymnals accompanied by organ or piano. We couldn’t do it. We had a different style that too many older ones deemed “of the devil.” One old parishioner in the first church I served full time disparagingly called it “kid worship.” Rather than embrace us, the older generation, as a whole, refused to receive us with our guitars, drums and contemporary music style. We couldn’t be ourselves and were therefore driven to create our own churches such as Calvary Chapel or the Vineyard. I will never believe God planned it that way. Too much was lost! While the Jesus Movement definitely left a great deposit, so much more could have been accomplished.

In the vast majority of churches today, however, such a refusal on the part of the older generation is a thing of the past. Young and old now sing the same songs in the same style with guitars, drums and electronic keyboards. The generations hunger for the same outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The young long for fathers and mothers in Christ to pour love,

affirmation and grace into their lives. Yet, tragically, the trend to create separate churches has accelerated, in some cases with the young sending a message that the older generation has become obsolete. I've heard some young people in the church stating openly that the older generation just doesn't "get it" or that the older generation doesn't really know how to worship as they do. The older generation then grieves the loss, while some few take offense at what they see as the arrogance of the young.

All of this is largely the long-term fruit of the destruction of effective fathering in our culture, fueled demonically by the spirit of Baal. In Bible times, under the influence of Baal, family connections and intergenerational bonds were destroyed as Baal seduced generations of parents into sacrificing their children by fire on the demonic promise of power to prosper. God's intended generational connection shattered, legacies of faith were cut off, and devotion to the one true God died.

The shape of generational separation today might appear to be different than it was for Israel, but the effect remains the same, as the kingdom of God suffers the consequences. I cannot say that I myself have always succeeded at generational connections, although I sincerely wish I could. For many years I have had close relationships with youth, but there have also been seasons when I seemed to fail miserably.

What I know beyond a shadow of doubt, however, is that I will not surrender the principle. Never will I allow myself to be defined or limited by my ever-advancing age, nor will I ever define or limit anyone else by the lesser number of years they've lived. The gifts and the calling of God transcend all that. In a healthy generational connection, the old are stretched to change, while the young are stretched to grow. Best if we do it all together! This was and remains God's plan in the days leading to the return of our Lord and Savior.

I am comforted in all this by the wording of Malachi 4:5-6. God spoke it as a promise, not a threat. It will, therefore, come to pass. The only remaining question is, who will be part of it to experience the glory? Please receive this as a vital prophetic call to prayer. Never surrender or give up on the promise of God! {eoa}

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