

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: *Youth Sunday*

SERIES: *Stand Alone*

SCRIPTURES:

SPEAKER: *Shaun Kipe*

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**Credit to Kara Powell (Fuller Youth Institute); John Ortberg*

SHAUN: Well good morning, it is so great to worship with you.

According to our church calendar this morning was supposed to be our annual “Youth Sunday” service. But given the restrictions. It was just not possible to have our students together and preparing for youth Sunday.

But, our students are so important to our community life. And so while we are not able to have them leading the service this morning, we still want to take this Sunday as an opportunity to honor and to celebrate our young people.

In fact, we just think this is really important to do. The coronavirus has effected everyone in the community, but certainly our students and school systems have had to make some of the biggest adjustments. And not only related to classes, but missing out on end of year celebrations, prom, graduations, athletics, friends etc. And it’s why today you’ll notice that those of us on stage are not wearing our typical Sunday morning attire. We just want you to know we’re with you in this.

And I’m fortunate to have our Student Ministry director Brady Smith with me today.

So, really what we’re all wondering is what has our student ministry been up to over the last few weeks?

BRADY: Thank you Shaun, and I'm very glad you asked! I actually have a little video to show you what my life has been like working here in quiet youth rooms...

Show Video

I have to say, I am very excited to share this message with you this morning. Because if there's one thing I am incredibly passionate about, it is young people and our students here in the church and community.

But I have to admit, I've noticed something a bit disappointing about our world, and Shaun I think you can agree to this. It's that there seems to be...

I. A Great Divide

Our world always seems to be trying to separate. We separate ourselves by culture, by language...we even separate ourselves by age. The young from the old...in music, in entertainment.

SHAUN: That's right. And so just to give everyone out there a taste of the generational divide. I'm actually going to invite Pastor Bill back up here for a little bit of fun. This is called Baby Boomers vs. Millennials. And for all of you at home you're welcome to join in the fun, as we ask questions, you can post your responses on the youtube conversation. But we're pitting Bill against Brady to see how well they know each others' generation.

QUIZ: Brady vs. Bill

Thanks for playing along Bill. It's as if the world's message seems to be divide and conquer.

And perhaps, churches can be the worst at this. Think about it, we have classes for children, classes for teens, classes for young adults and then classes for “more experienced adults.”

And just to clarify, this division isn't always bad or wrong. Certainly there are appropriate times for these divisions. It's just that, if we're not careful we divide and separate so much and so often we end up disconnected and even cut off from each other.

But I'm not sure that's an accurate **picture of God's people** and the community He was intending.

Jesus is always the best example for us. Think about this. Jesus recruited a group of young followers to watch and learn from him. Many Biblical scholars believe that Jesus' disciples were likely in their teens. *Making Jesus the very first youth pastor.* (Ortberg)

When the Apostle Paul looked around his world, he saw the division that was taking place he wrote to the church in Galatia...

Galatians 3:28 - ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female... (we might add, neither Baby Boomer nor Millennial)...for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Truth is, an accurate picture of God's family is always one of great diversity. And we believe at Five Forks that this great diversity means **an intergenerational church.** (Fuller Youth Institute). Where young and old, where Baby Boomers & Millennials and Gen Z all learn from one another, and learn to appreciate one another and even to honor and celebrate on another.

If we don't, we will miss out on the fullness of community life, God intended for His people.

And so today, Five Forks two parts to this message. Why young folks need older folks and why older folks need younger folks. We hope that this message will challenge you and inspire you to aim for a fuller, more accurate picture of what God intended.

Brady: First,

I. Why young folks need older folks.

If you are young you need to be around older people. Simple as that. You need their wisdom. You need their life experience. You need their example of faith. You need their life lessons. You need to remember that the only reason you are here today is because of the generations before you.

Some of you may be familiar with a more recent, popular and derogatory phrase, **“Ok, Boomer.”**

It's a phrase that was pretty widespread, a few months ago, that many young people were using.

Essentially, it was a backlash to the hate and blame that many young people felt they were receiving from the older generations, such as the Baby Boomer generation.

Young people began responding to anything an older person would say, with this phrase... “Ok, Boomer” as a way of sarcastically saying, *“You're too old to understand me. So why don't you just stop talking!”*

But, young people, you did not become who you are on your own. Just pause for a moment and think about your parents, grandparents, teachers, aunts, uncles, coaches, older siblings...and the many lessons they taught you about life, that have impacted who you are today.

SHAUN: (PIC OF SHAUN&DAD on half the screen) Who was sitting beside you, sounding out letters and sounds as you learned to read? Who was holding your hand as you learned to take your first step?

BRADY: (PIC OF BRADY&DANIELLE on the other half of the screen) Who taught you to ride a bicycle?

SHAUN: Who was holding your hand as you learned to take your first step?

BRADY: Who taught you to tie shoes?

SHAUN: Who taught you to bake Christmas cookies?

BRADY: Who taught you to drive a car?

SHAUN: Who taught you to shoot a BB gun?

BRADY: Who taught you “righty-tighty, lefty-loosy”?

It doesn't take long to realize, we need the wisdom and the life lessons of those who have gone before us.

This is a theme you find all throughout Scripture.

Job 12:12 - Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?

Deuteronomy 32:7 - ⁷ Remember the days of old, consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you.

There's a great story in **Exodus chapter 18** where Moses learns a valuable life lesson from someone who has a little more experience.

It is in this passage where we see Moses is leading the entire people of Israel, which is about 2 million people, and while he was doing so, he was trying to do it all on his own! Yes, you heard me right!

In our world we might say he was *“Young and dumb.”*

So while this was happening, Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, was visiting and noticed all the stress that Moses was putting on himself and so he offered him some elderly wisdom about life...listen to verse 17,

17 “What you are doing is not good. 18 You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. 19 Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, select capable men from all the people and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens...That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you.

Can you imagine Moses responding to him by saying, **“Ok, Boomer.”** *“Jethro, you’re too old to understand me. Just stop talking and let me do this my way.”*

Or what about the contrary? What if Jethro saw what Moses was doing and said, *“What a senseless Millennial...young people today. Look where our world is headed.”*

I think you can see what I’m getting at. We need each other.

I am reminded of my Pappy Smith (**PIC OF LITTLE BRADY AND PAPPY SMITH**) with all he taught me. He would give me tips when I was learning how to wrestling. He taught me how to play various board games and card games like Phase 10.

He even taught me what it looks like to pray, although he never gave me direct verbal instructions, I remember watching him pray one time when I was around 7-8 years old and seeing the passion and joy on his face and in his actions while he prayed... taught me so much. I am, who I am, because of him.

Young people, it's true you're grandparents or parents may not exactly know how to operate an iPhone or a zoom meeting. They've probably never heard of doordash. But when it comes to navigating life...it's just so important to remember they've been through it. Whatever it is you're experiencing, there is someone who has gone before you, who has experienced something similar and they have wisdom to offer.

If you've been struggling in school, with grades or expectations and not sure how to handle it. There's someone who has gone through that, with wisdom to offer you.

Maybe you have questions about relationships and dating. There is someone who has gone through that before you, with wisdom to offer.

If you're facing temptations, maybe its images you look at or alcohol...you're not the first.

Maybe you've been wrestling with your own faith journey and questions about God and Christianity. You're not alone.

Young people we do not get through life on our own, we need wisdom from those who have gone before.

So two simple suggestions, ways you can put this into practice.

1. Be willing to listen

The most important part of the story for Moses, actually happens in verse 24...Jethro has just given Moses this great advice about leading the nation, now read verse 24...

Moses listened to his father-in-law

Just start a habit to sit and talk with your parents or your grandparents or youth leaders or other respected adults in your life. Listen to their stories from past life experiences. Ask questions, tell them what you're experiencing and going through. It will be awkward at first. But you'll probably be surprised at how much you share in common and how much you can learn from each other.

SHAUN: Second, consider starting the habit of going to the

2. "Big church services"

Author Kara Powell, with the Fuller Youth Institute has been doing research related to young people and their faith and they've discovered that one of the primary factors in a young person "sticking with" their faith after High school...is they attended big church worship services, they interacted weekly with older followers of Jesus.

It may seem odd for a little while. It won't be what you're used to. But if you're truly interested in learning about life, about walking with Jesus, about faith...you'll be surrounded by a whole host of experienced followers.

If we learn to do this, we'll learn a lot about life and save ourselves a lot of trouble and most importantly we'll start getting closer to God's vision of an intergenerational church. We could do this at Five Forks.

Alright so now let's turn the tables...

II. Why older folks need younger folks

If you are of the older variety, you need to be around young people. In fact, God intended for you to be around young people. We know this because, 250 babies are born every minute.

God is saying 250 times, every minute, we need another young person in the human race to help shape, change, and participate in, where the grand story of humanity is headed. So if you don't like the idea, blame God, cause He's the one making them!

You need their energy and enthusiasm. You need their innovation. You need their dreaming. You need their new ideas about life. You need their unconventional wisdom. More than ever today, you need someone in your life who understands modern technology.

Brady: It reminds me of another story of my Pappy Smith. A few years ago while I was in college I had an incredible experience after he went from an ordinary flip phone, to a brand new iPhone! Some of you are even sitting out there right now, wondering what the difference is.

Sadly, he did not really know how to use it quite yet. So while I was up in Lancaster for college and I was at the Wednesday night youth group at the church I attended there, we just dismissed the teens and soon after I got a call from my Pappy Smith. I answer and what do I hear? I hear him and his wife talking to each other trying to figure out how to work this new device. I kid you not, it took them 5 minutes to realize that they had been on a phone call with me. It was absolutely hilarious and we had a good laugh about it while I then tried to briefly explain how to use their iPhone.

Shaun: We need innovation. New ideas. We need someone to show us how to use our new iphones. I hear people sometimes talking about “going back to the good ole’ days.”

And while it’s ok to reminisce, it makes me wonder if we’ve really given thought to going back to the good ole’ days.

Before cell phones, internet, color televisions...I mean think about what it would be like, even 20 years ago going through this virus epidemic without the most recent, modern technology.

Truth is, if we get stuck in “the good ole’ days”, we’ll actually miss out on the progress and innovation that God intended for his community.

One of my favorite stories in Scripture is found in **2 Kings 5**.

Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the Lord had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.

Now many of you who grew up in church have heard this story before, and you know where it’s headed. There are two main characters in the story.

Naaman is an experienced Army commander, who has leprosy.

There’s another well-known character in the story. Great prophet. Elisha. And often when we tell this story that’s the focus. Two, grown, powerful, men.

Naaman goes to Elisha for help and ends up, miraculously cleansed of his leprosy.

What's interesting is that if you read the story carefully you discover there is a third, unnamed, often-forgotten character who just might be the real hero of the story. Listen...

2 Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife.

Young, foreign, slave girl. The writer doesn't even bother to tell us her name. In the story, she is mentioned only in these 2 verses.

3 She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

So really important detail in the story. Naaman is not an Israelite, he is **Aramean**. He's pagan, idol worshiper. He would be considered evil. He's an enemy of God's people. Elisha is an **Israelite**, part of God's Chosen.

Think about it like this. Brady's a Dallas Cowboy's fan. In the Bible that's like being Aramean. It's evil. It's kind of like having leprosy. I'm San Francisco 49ers fan. In the Bible that's like an Israelite, God's chosen. We all know, Cowboy's fans and 49ers fans don't help each other out. You never put them in the same room, without social distancing. That's why Brady is over there and I'm over here.

The Israelites and the Arameans didn't get along. In fact they were almost always at war with Israel. They're enemies. They don't help each other out. Everybody knows that.

So did you catch what the young, slave girl suggested? I'll read it to you again...

3 She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

Now just think for a moment about what's happening in this story.

BRADY (LAUGH)

SHAUN: What's so funny?

BRADY: I'm sorry. You said the 49ers fans were like God's chosen...how did that work out in the Super Bowl a couple months ago? I'm just kidding...I'm actually laughing because this young slave girl's idea is just so ridiculous. It sounds like the advice of a young, nameless, foreign, slave, girl who doesn't understand real life.

SHAUN: The Aramean Army commander to visit the Jewish prophet. Conventional wisdom would say...don't put these two men together. That's how the world works. Unheard of, unthinkable, unconventional.

You know what's going inside her mind. *"I have some wisdom for this situation. I have some answers, solutions that nobody thought of before. I can help the great army commander, if he'll just be willing to listen to me."*

She's young, she may even seem naïve. But she's has a different perspective on life. She has a new kind of enthusiasm. She's not blinded by "the good ole days"; the history of animosity between Jews and Arameans...she's not trapped by conventional wisdom about slaves and the place of women in her society.

Without her suggestion, the story never happens? Without her wisdom Naaman never meets Elisha? Without her, Naaman faces a sure death sentence from leprosy?

Older folks, we have this tendency to get stuck in our ways of thinking. We're not very good at thinking outside of the box and the problem is if we close ourselves off we'll miss out on the new ideas that our young people have to offer.

What this world needs, what the church needs today...and has always needed... is a group of young people who come along with new and fresh ideas and unconventional wisdom about how to share the Good News of Jesus in our world today.

Who will take on the challenges of world hunger, abusive relationships, bullying, economic inequality with renewed innovation.

With fresh ideas about cancer cures and coronavirus treatments.

And for that to happen we need a group of older folks who will step up as cheerleaders for the younger generations. To cheer on and support, listen, join these younger folks.

Paul said as much to his young apprentice Timothy

1 Timothy 4 - ¹² Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

Folks, I'll just tell you if there's one thing we can't do, it's fail to take our young people seriously. Some of the statistics about young people walking away from their faith or from churches is scary. And I believe it's often because we have told them, we're not interested in their ideas.

So two simple suggestions, ways you can put this into practice.

1. Love on young people.

I was reading that *"Every young person needs at least one older person who is absolutely crazy about them!"*

I started in youth ministry 10 years ago. I have to tell you about one of our youth leaders at the time. I won't tell you his name, because he wouldn't want this kind of recognition. He was a little older, even at the time I started in youth ministry.

He had started serving in youth ministry, many years earlier, when his children were in the youth group. Fascinating thing was, he didn't stop serving after his own kids graduated. He wasn't a teacher. In all of his time in youth group, I bet I only saw him teach once or twice. He wasn't an organizer. He was never the primary event leader for any of our events.

What he was, was a man who loved young people and wanted to be around young people and wanted to let young people know they were loved. He was there every Sunday and every Wednesday. He spent his time, making his rounds giving teens hugs and handshakes and asking them about life. I don't think I ever heard him complain about "young people today...or music today...or technology today"

What I noticed is that our teens never cared about his age or the color of his hair. But they did notice when he wasn't there. He was absolutely crazy about young people and it had an impact. By the way, thank you to all of our youth leaders out there who are doing this!

So, if you're out there and you're of the older variety of Christian. And you're really interested in passing the faith along. This is where it's gonna start.

It's your responsibility to step up to the plate and get involved in the lives of our young people. It might be by volunteering in our youth ministry. Start by talking to Brady.

Brady: Yes, please talk to me if you're interested!

I've read dozens of personal testimonies about people who walked away from their faith while in high school or shortly after because of things happening in their lives and it felt like nothing/no one was there to support them.

But also, another simple way our church can begin doing this is for everybody out there, to make a commitment get to know at least **1 teen in our church by name**. This MUST be done within the safeguards of their parental permission and guidelines. But we find a way to reach out and ask a student about life and how you can be praying for them. How soccer practice is going.

So let me ask you, those of you who are older, what are you doing to comfort young people who are hurting?

What are you doing to help answer their hard questions?

What are you doing to help them feel loved?

What are you doing to encourage their new ideas?

What are you doing to pass your faith and understanding along to them?

Shaun: Second,

2. Give up your rights.

If we really care about reaching young people, if it's truly our desire to pass our faith on to the next generation, then those of us who are older will have start by giving up our preferences first.

Our style, our taste, our decibel level, our comfort for the sake of our young people.

You can look this up when you have more time, but in the Bible, one of the clearest markers of spiritual maturity is "giving up our freedom, our rights, our preferences" for others.

This is the way of Jesus and he becomes our master, as we mature in taking on his character...it becomes our way as well.

Jesus healed, restored, empowered, by giving up his rights.

“You should have the same mind as Christ, who being in nature God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant.”

That’s how it works in his Kingdom. We’ll have to take that seriously if we want to pass along the faith.

If there’s one thing we can’t do as we mature it’s look down on younger folks, don’t get stingy or cranky or grumpy in our old age. Don’t get stuck thinking our way is the right way or the only way or the best way.

SHAUN: Yep older folks...we need young folks.

BRADY: Yep, young folks...we need older folks.

Truth is, an accurate picture of God’s family is always one of great diversity. And we believe at Five Forks that this great diversity means an intergenerational church. Where young and old learn from one another, and learn to appreciate one another and even to honor and celebrate one another. God made it that way.

PRAY

Our desire is to build God’s kingdom on earth...and that will require young and old working together. Please enjoy some of these pictures of our student ministry as sing our closing song...Build your kingdom here...