

By looking at the New Testament images of the church, it is quite clear that a healthy church is alive and dynamic; it grows in more and more generations. The New Testament depiction of the church as God's family is characterized by the natural dynamics of succeeding generations: Fathers are those who have children. As the „children“ grow into „young people“ and in due time they also become „fathers“.

Other biblical illustrations of the church also include the idea of generations. Like God's flock. It bleats there, grazes, milks, shears... and of course a healthy herd also reproduces in subsequent generations. Similarly, the image of God's field captures sowing, growth, harvest, feeding, abundance... and inevitably, generations of more and more harvests!

We also have several very clear challenges in the New Testament to the concept of the church as a multi-generational movement. The most famous is probably 2 Timothy 2:2. *What you have heard from me in front of many witnesses, entrust it to faithful people who will be able to teach others also.*

1. What you have heard from me - the apostle Paul as the first generation
2. you, Timothy - like the second generation
3. entrust to faithful people - as the third generation
4. who will also be able to teach others - and those „others“ are to Paul already the fourth generation of disciples.

If you want it in a larger dimension than just an instruction for „one Timothy“, look at 1st Thessalonians 1:6-9. *You have become imitators of us and of the Lord, when you received the Word in many tribulations with the joy of the Holy Spirit. 7 By this you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 From you the Word of the Lord was heard not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also your faith, which is directed to God, has spread everywhere, so that we do not need to speak about it at all. 9 For they themselves tell about us how we came to you and how you turned from the idols to serve the living and true God.*

Notice:

1. You imitate us and the Lord - which is the first generation
2. you Thessalonians as the second generation imitate us
3. you have become an example and from you the word of the Lord has been heard in

Macedonia and Achaia. Macedonians and Achaeans become the third generation of disciples.

4. And the fourth generation hears it from the Macedonians and Achaeans – they are the ones „everywhere“. What is the result is Paul’s statement? „There is no need for us to talk about it at all.“

If we focus our attention on generations, our view of the church will shift quite a bit!

This is how the Lord Jesus sends his disciples after his resurrection: (Acts 1:8) *You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit that will come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.* A little later we read: Acts 8,1 *On that day began a great persecution of the church that was in Jerusalem; all but the apostles were scattered throughout the territory of Judea and Samaria.*

1. Somehow the apostles were able to stay in Jerusalem!
2. But all the rest—that is, the entire second generation—scattered throughout the territory of Judea and Samaria!
3. And in the later chapters of the book of Acts we see that through the third generation of newly reached disciples
4. the Good News has hit the literal „ends of the earth“ at that time – i.e. the fourth generation and the following!

Another example can be

1. the apostle Paul in Corinth,
2. where he worked „with a certain Jew Aquila and his wife Priscilla“ (Acts 18:2).
3. A little later, Priscilla and Aquila meet a man named Apollos, whom they took as a disciple (Acts 18:26) and „explained to him the way of God even more accurately,“. Watch carefully what this „discipling“ did to Apollos.
4. Apollos then serves in Corinth, and some new believers form too strong bond with him that they then say „I am Apollo’s,“. (1 Corinthians 3,4)

On the one hand, I completely understand that some part of the church sometimes has to include a „hospital“ ministry. However, the New Testament clearly shows a healthy church,



G08. The Church As a Movement

or at least a healthy parts of it, as a MOVEMENT. Though it was a very difficult time of great persecution! The movement is simply more and more generations of disciples who quite naturally create more and more generations of new communities, that is churches.

Lord Jesus, please let us see the healthy present application of this vital multi-generational church as we observe it in Your Word!