

# CHEERING ON THE NEXT GENERATION

CMBC November 22, 2015

Titus 2:1 – 15; 1 Kings 13:1 – 32

The Apostle Paul's letter to the young pastor, Titus, is great instruction about how people of different generations must work together for the purpose of God. Whether it is young or old, male or female, there is a place for them all. But it often brings some difficult challenges for us.

Our son was in his early twenties when he became a youth pastor. One day, after a tough youth session, he slumped down in a chair in my office and said, "I think I just experienced the generation gap." I didn't think he was yet on this side of the gap. It takes a special grace of God for new and old to work well as a team.

Some churches are great places for young pastors to have their first experience. I pastored a church like that in my first full time pastorate. And they had several young pastors just out of seminary who all gave credit to a great start in this church.

One church required that every Board member mentor a new, or younger member. This church developed great leaders.

In 1 Kings 13 we have the story of two prophets. I call them the young and the old prophet. And this story is a sad illustration of what happens when the two can't work together.

Let's get some background to this story.

## 1. The Story Of The Two Prophets

- a. The coup d'état that divided Israel into two nations.
- b. Rehoboam – Solomon's son now the king in his dad's place
  - i. The people complained of high taxes and asked for the new king to give them some relief.
  - ii. He consulted the elders who had been his dad's advisors and they said, <sup>7</sup> "If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favourable answer, they will always be your servants."
  - iii. Then Rehoboam consulted his young friends and they said, "You are now king, show them your authority and tell them you will tax them even harder."
  - iv. The people called on Jeroboam and supported the coup d'état he led, but the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to Rehoboam, David's line.
  - v. So now you had two countries, Judah and Israel.
- c. Bethel – A new place of worship to stop trips to Jerusalem
  - i. Jerusalem had been the place of worship for the children of Israel and that is where the new spectacular temple Solomon had built was located,
  - ii. Jeroboam was afraid that when the people would go back to Jerusalem to worship, they would change their minds about being a

separate country and another coup d'état would happen to reunite the countries.

- iii. So he built a new place of worship on the border of the two countries, saying it would be easier for the people not have to make the long trip to Jerusalem.
- iv. In fact, Bethel was the place where Jacob had a gone to worship God.

d. Golden Calf – A shrine to forget the Temple

- i. But then he had to build something special, so he made two Golden Calves, like they once had in the desert, and set up one at Bethel and one up north in Dan, near the northern border,
- ii. With this they also built a huge altar, bigger than anything in the Temple
- iii. He told the people that this was the god who had brought them out of Egypt.
- iv. We read: <sup>30</sup>He built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites. <sup>32</sup>He instituted their own festival to replace the festivals of the Temple.
- v. How easily the people were led to make a religion that suited their circumstances, that was politically correct.

e. Young Prophet – A man of God from Judah

- i. God then called a young prophet from Judah to come up to Bethel, to confront Jeroboam and the people
- ii. Actually the one that I call the young prophet is only referred to as the “man of God from Judah”. But the prophet from Israel is referred to as the old prophet. It could have been the old prophet and a new prophet. The lesson is the same.
- iii. The young prophet courageously went right to the altar and prophesied against it, and gave a sign: **The altar will be split and the ashes will pour out.** He also prophesied that the new religion of the new nation would bring terrible evil upon the people and the land.
- iv. When Jeroboam heard this, he stretched out his hand toward the young prophet and shouted, **“Arrest him.”**
- v. At that moment the altar split in two and the ashes poured out. As well Jeroboam’s arm was frozen so that he could not pull it back.
- vi. <sup>6</sup>Then the king said to the man of God, **“Intercede with the LORD your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored.”** So the man of God interceded with the LORD, and the king's hand was restored and became as it was before.
- vii. Then the king invited the young prophet to come home with him for something to eat and to receive a gift from the king.
- viii. <sup>8</sup>But the man of God answered the king, **“Even if you were to give me half your possessions, I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water here. <sup>9</sup>For I was commanded by the word of the LORD: ‘You must not eat bread or drink water or return by the way you came.’” <sup>10</sup>So he took another road and did not return by the way he had come to Bethel.**

f. Old Prophet – A prophet living in Israel

- i. There was an old prophet living in Bethel at the time and when he heard what the young prophet had done, he rode after him and found him sitting under an oak tree.
- ii. He asked, “Are you the man of God who came from Judah?” “I am,” he replied. <sup>15</sup>So the prophet said to him “Come home with me and eat.” The young prophet gave him the same answer he had given the king.
- iii. <sup>18</sup>The old prophet answered, “I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the LORD: ‘Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.’” (But he was lying to him.) <sup>19</sup>So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house.
- iv. <sup>20</sup>While they were sitting at the table, the word of the LORD came to the old prophet who had brought him back. <sup>21</sup>He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, “This is what the LORD says: ‘you have defied the word of the LORD and have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you. <sup>22</sup>You came back and ate bread and drank water in the place where he told you not to eat or drink. Therefore your body will not be buried in the tomb of your fathers.’”
- v. On his way back to Judah the young prophet was attacked by a lion and killed.
- vi. When the old prophet heard that the man of God was killed, he went to find the body, brought it back and buried it in the old prophets town.
- vii. Then he mourned for the young prophet, and said to his sons, “When I die bury me beside this young prophet, for all that he said will come true.”

There are some very troubling pieces to this story, and I don’t understand the deceitful role of the old prophet. But God saw fit to include this story, taking up more than one whole chapter in the Bible.

I do think that God has some important lessons for us to learn from this story,

- teaching us about the dangers of adjusting God’s word to suit what we want to hear,
- lessons from the young prophet
- and lessons from the old prophet.

**2. Lessons From The Young Prophet**

Here is what I would say to the young prophet, lessons we all should pay attention to:

- a. Temptations can come from someone you trust
- b. Success destroys more people than does failure
- c. You can appear all right to others but the problem on the inside can end your ministry. God says, “I can’t use you anymore.”
- d. Neglecting talking to God will ruin your ministry
  - i. I don’t read that he prayed seeking God’s guidance in healing Jeroboam’s arm. It may be that Jeroboam should have live with a stretched out hand for the rest of his life. At the end of this story we

read: **13:33** Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways, but once more appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people. Anyone who wanted to become a priest he consecrated for the high places. [34] This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth.

1. It wouldn't be surprising that the young prophet would have felt impressed that the king now humbly recognized the young prophet's power.
2. A chance to show him again.
- ii. I don't read that the young prophet sought God to clarify the contradiction of the old prophet's words.
  1. Again it would be pretty heady stuff to have the old prophet's attention.
  2. He could tell the old prophet how he had impressed the king.
- iii. Neglecting talking to God will ruin your ministry

### **3. Now what about the old prophet?**

- a. I get mad at him. It is the part of the story where you can hardly go on. I do soften a little at the end.
- b. I have to admit I am not sure what is going on. The person who deserves to die is the old prophet.
- c. Sometimes God has to use very suspect sources to teach us about our heart.
- d. I think there is a little of the old prophet in all of us. Have you been happy to see someone fail?

### **4. The Struggles For The Old Prophet**

- a. He is offended at the courage and success of the young prophet. After all this is his territory. The old prophet has let the country slip and has a hard time dealing with his failure.
- b. He wanted to at least associate with this success but the young prophet snubs him
- c. It hurts to suddenly be on the outside. They are making decision without you, carrying on successful ministry without you.
- d. How many young leaders have been crushed by "old prophets"!

### **5. Advice For The Old Prophet**

- a. Does the young prophet have a problem? Yes but help him
- b. Prayer support is the best help you can give. SWAT Team "I never go without your prayer."
- c. Celebrate what he is doing right. You have lots of good advice. Don't tell him how you did it. Point to the faithfulness of God. He may even come around to ask you for your advice.
- d. Prepare the young prophet for ministry
- e. With God's help you can learn some things from the young prophet

### **6. Who is the "young prophet" in your life?**

- a. A young leader who suddenly acts so spiritual and important

- b. The new person in the church giving all sorts of advice about what the church should do
- c. The new believer who still has a lot to learn
- d. A young member agitating for change
- e. A neighbouring church that does ministry differently
- f. A church which is seeing a lot of new conversions. “But,” we say, “are those truly genuine commitments.”

The Apostle Paul was a Christ-like model of cheering on the next generation

**1 Timothy 4:12** speaking to a young pastor

[11] Teach these things and insist that everyone learn them. [12] Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.

As were his instructions to young Titus.

O Lord, our ego can so easily get in the way of our service for You. Help us to know that when there is great ministry, it is because You are working through us and your servants, in spite of our age, our gender, our position or our gifting. Help us to be an encouragement and a support to those whom you use.