

**Growing Young Adventists:
Growing Young with Jesus – Introduction
Younger Generation Church, July 8, 2017
A Allan Martin, PhD**

Good morning! Welcome to Younger Generation Church. We are starting a brand new series that I am very, very excited about – so excited that I forgot to bring my book with me. I'll bring it next week so that you can see it as well. The entire series is called Growing Young Adventists, and it's based on a book called *Growing Young: 6 Essentials and Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church*.



You may be wondering why this is important at Younger Generation Church and I'm going to share that with you in just a moment. The book is available online and I encourage you to check it out. It's very, very good stuff. [churchesgrowingyoung.com]

I'm also really excited because many of you are new school. If you're old school, there's a pew Bible right in front of you and that's perfectly fine. But if you have your electronic device, our young adults have helped us put together a snazzy little app. Find the YouVersion app, scroll down to the corner, click on "events" and you'll find YG Church. Here you will find sermon notes, scriptures, and some of the announcements that are coming up here in short order. [<https://www.bible.com/events/244174>]

So, we're getting started with this brand new series; a really exciting series for me, called Growing Young Adventists, and we want to say a very special welcome to all of our viewers that are joining us online. We're glad that you are here, including those of you that are on Facebook live.

We're introducing this idea of growing young. Now some of you are saying, "Oh great! This message doesn't apply to me." Hold off on that thought because you're going to find out this applies to all of us. In fact, some of you are thinking in your mind right now, "Pastor Allan, why, why is this important?" Well, if you just give us a little bit of a bridge here, we're just going to dive straight into the Word of God and see what the Word of God has to say in regards to growing young. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, even now, You did it in the generations of old with the biblical heroes that seem so far away, but You want to do it again in this generation, with us. So I ask and pray, Lord God, that, even though many of our churches are growing old, some of our churches are growing obsolete and some of our congregations have literally withered away at the vine. We ask and pray that You will give us the

vibrancy, the vitality that only new generations can bring. Allow us to see what You're doing in our generation. We ask and pray these things in Your name, Amen.



Some of you are thinking, “Pastor Allan, okay, you don’t have to beat us over the head in order for us to see the importance of young people. We get it.” I have a variety of my research individuals that I collaborate with across the North American Division and they say, “Okay, every time we see Pastor Allan, he shares with us that this percentage of young people are leaving the church; This is happening in regards to teenagers—when they graduate from high school—they want to be somewhere other than in the church services; and why this decline is happening.” But, there’s more to this story than that. Here are the reasons why this is so important.

How many of you have ever seen the Olympics? Any of you seen the Olympics? Raise your hand if you have; if you haven’t seen the Olympics or don’t know what that is, you can check that out on Google. I’m not a big track and field guy, but there is a particular race that I’m always fascinated with. It’s called the 400 relay or the 800 relay. Anyone understand what those are – the 400 relay and the 800 relay? These races actually have very little to do with how fast people are because everyone in this relay is fast. Do you know the secret to winning the 400 or the 800 relay? The secret is the baton pass. That is where the race is won. The baton is this little, very lightweight stick – I think it’s aluminum. As you’re watching these people literally flying on that track, there is this little window of space where one individual has their hand placed ready to pick up the baton and the other person is coming full tilt. Then the second person starts taking strides forward and, at the right moment, the current runner will pass the baton and the race continues. If that is not done well—if that pass off is somehow fumbled—if it basically fails, the race is lost.

And it’s not just in the Olympic races. The Scriptures share with us wonderful stories of great biblical triumphs for the kingdom of God. But the Scriptures also share places where the baton was missed. If you know the story of Moses, you know that God showed him great favor. Moses was a wise man because he didn’t just keep all that wisdom and all that grace and all that love to himself. He actually poured it into the next generation, specifically into a young man by the name of Joshua. We hear in the Scriptures the great exploits of this brave, courageous young man that brought the children of Israel into the Promised Land. A young man named Joshua.

But if you look in the Scriptures, there is a daunting story that talks about the baton pass. Turn in your Scriptures to the book of Judges, chapter 2 starting with verse 7.

In this story we will see how Joshua was able to lead a rag-tag bunch of slaves through the wilderness into the Promised Land, and all because Moses passed the baton to the next generation.

Listen to the Word of God. *“And the Israelites served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and the leaders who outlived him—those who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel. Joshua, the son of Num, servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110. After that generation had died, another generation grew up and did not acknowledge the Lord or remember the mighty things He had done for Israel.”* –Judges 2:7-8, 10 [NLT]

So, why is growing young so important? It’s important because every generation has its Achilles’ heel. If we’re not careful, we can get so wrapped up with our own lives, the people we’ve grown up with and the people we know, that we forget our responsibility to connect with the next generation. And just like that, a generation that so vibrantly followed God can be followed by another generation that doesn’t even know who He is. It can happen . . . just . . . like . . . that.

For some of you, when you’re gone and finished with your time here on earth, you aspire to have your name on the side of a building. Others of you may think it’s a really important thing to develop some wealth, to accumulate some stuff while you’re here on earth and that’s how you plan to pass on your legacy to your children and your grandchildren. But let me suggest an alternative legacy to you all as we take a look at the importance of growing young.

A startling thing happened to me this week. For the first time, I received an envelope from AARP [American Association of Retired Persons]. It gets real when they start profiling you and you begin to receive their junk mail. There are some great subscriptions in there and some discounts that I might take advantage of.

When it’s all said and done, I won’t be able to carry that building [with my name on it] up to heaven with me. All the stuff that I could accumulate; all the wealth, the prestige, the accolades, the promotions that I put so much effort into on this earth, none of these things are going with me when I go.



The only thing that may go with me is that young person that I said, “You know what. I’m going to pour a little of that goodness that God’s given me into your life. I’m going to share a little bit of wisdom. You don’t have to go through that trial if you’re willing to listen to the discernment, because God worked on me when I was a young person. He showed me some wisdom. I’m going to pass that on to you so you don’t have to end up in that ditch.”

*My friends, why is this important? **Because the race is won at the pass of the baton.***

Another reason this is so important is that it's time for us to get out of our silos. For those of you who aren't aware of what a silo is, silos are those things that hold those missiles. There are silos all over the country, standing alone and talking to no one. The only thing they do is simply wait for orders. This is so important because [the sad truth is] it's so easy for us to get caught up and isolated in our own silo. Isn't that true?

In the Scriptures, there's a great portion here that I think is worth taking a look at. Psalm 145:4 [NIV] says this: "*One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.*"

Now last series we talked about some of our purposes. Right now, I want you ask yourselves, "What is something subtle or spectacular that the Lord has done for me?" It could be anything. It could be as gigantic as parting the Red Sea or as simple as finding you a parking spot at Macy's. Many of us have kept the testimony of what God is doing in our lives to ourselves. The only time we dare say something about it is at the appropriate time during Sabbath School or in the midst of a Bible study discussion. It's time for us to stop living in silos, keeping ourselves to ourselves, and minding our own business, and it's time we begin to share our lives with other individuals around us, including those that are older and younger than us.

The Bible gives us clear and distinctive admonition regarding this in 1 Corinthians. You've heard a sermon or two preached on this. Chapter 12, verse 27, "*All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.*" –1 Corinthians 12:27 [NLT]

Some of you say, "Oh, but Pastor, it's only talented, spectacular singers that are part of the body," or "Oh, but Pastor Allan, it's only individuals who know how to share a Bible study and ask the right questions that are part of the body," or "Oh, Pastor Allan, it's only for the evangelists," or "Oh, Pastor Allan, it's only for you." No. Each and every one of you, right now, can connect to 5 people, 3 people, a dozen people that I will never meet, people that will never set foot in this church. You are the individual, as part of the spiritual body that extends us out of the silo of this church, out of the silo of those that decided to find us on the internet. You extend us beyond ourselves to expand the kingdom and share what the Lord has done for you and share His mighty works. Or you can continue to be silent and live in your silo, waiting for some coming word about what you're supposed to do.

I read a great quote. It's a great quote that, I think, helps us to get out of these silos, because in the research, these silos are actually partly my fault. I'll accept some of the responsibility. It's partially my fault because demographers and researchers and sociologists have created these definitions of generations. Have you heard this before? The Baby Boomers and the GI Generation, the Xers and the Millennials. We've created all these different silos of generations.

Some of you can say, “*Yeah! We’re the generations who knew what ‘Friends’ was as a sitcom.*” Or, “*Yeah! We’re the generation that burned our bras and draft cards.*” Or, “*Yeah! We’re the generation that made it legitimate to wear a man bun.*”

We can talk about these different silos that we’ve created, and unfortunately, I think it’s a little unbiblical. There’s a great quote that kind of shook me up and I think it’s going to be worth saying here. I don’t know who it’s from and I apologize to whoever came up with this quote. Maybe Mike Tucker came up with this quote; I don’t know. Someone famous and wise said this quote:

“If you are alive today, then it’s your generation’s turn to do great things.”

Did you hear that? If you’re 90 and you’re alive, then you’re a part of this generation. If you’re 9-years-old and alive, you’re a part of this generation. We’re going to see and experience things in this culture, in this contemporary age that no other generation of alive people will experience. And if you are alive today. . . if you are a Christ follower today. . . it is your turn – 9 to 90; 19-years-old or 69-years-old – it is your turn to do great things for the sake of His glory in our generation. It’s our time to get out of our silos.

There’s a great verse that oftentimes youth pastors will turn to; One that you’ll probably hear from a youth director making a Pathfinder camporee sermon. You’ll hear a sermon with this verse at the General Conference session or some camp meeting. You’ll hear it over and over again. This morning we turn to it again in 1 Timothy 4:12 [NKJV], “*Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*” This was the admonition of the apostle Paul to a young “whippersnapper” named Timothy.

Oftentimes, quite honestly, I fallen into this [assumption] too. When I was young, when I thought of all these biblical characters, they were all bearded and old. Didn’t you think of them that way too? Wasn’t that your picture of all these biblical stories with these people of great faith? Well, I just want to shake that up a little bit. I just want to help you understand that Paul was sharing this – “Don’t despise



your youth” – because for the generations of that time—the older, wiser, more religious, more educated individuals—looked down on those younger generations. This is not a new phenomenon. But even in my own mind, I went through this as well. So I’m going to ask some of my friends to help me out in regards to understanding a little bit of what has happened all throughout the biblical record.

Any of you remember the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? I think of them as men, right? I think of them as older men, but in actuality, if the biblical record is correct, they were around 14-

years-old. So can the person who has my little 14 sign. . . can you come on up? All right, we have Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—right here—defying King Nebuchadnezzar and taking a stand when everyone else would bow.

I did a little more research, and Queen Esther was 15. Where's my 15-year-old? Come up and stand in your place. The fate of the entire Jewish nation resided on the courage of this young person.

What about David? You remember David slaying Goliath, right? He was 16-years-old! Was he like some Rambo-like militant, tae kwon do, assault rifle-wielding adult? No, he was a 16-year-old.

And what about when Joseph was sold into slavery? Do you know how old he was? He was 17-years-old. One of my 17-year-olds, come on up.



And just so some of you will acknowledge that I'm Adventist, let's see how old some of our church founders were at the time. Whenever I see photos of them, I think about old geezers, right? But you know what age Ellen Harmon received her first vision? She was 17-years-old. Another 17-year-old come up and stand on the 17-year-old spot. Ellen Harmon, who became Ellen White and one of the prolific writers who helped found the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was 17 years old.

Do you know how old the disciples were when Jesus called them? Anyone have a guess? There's probably a range of ages, and I'm not smart enough to know exactly where they were in their ages, but they were somewhere between 18 and 22, so my 18-year-old, my 19-year-old, my 20-year-old, my 21-year-old, my 22-year-old, please come and stand up here somewhere on stage.

Again, just to make sure you know that I'm a Seventh-day Adventist in good and regular standing, Uriah Smith, one of our church founders, he was 23 years old when he became the editor of the *Adventist Review*. Now we're getting really, really ancient.

J. N. Andrews, the first missionary of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Do you know when his theological discoveries helped him to identify in Revelation the United States of America? When he was 26-years-old. **26-years-old.**

And then, of course, if you were to put into play here the Lord Jesus . . . when did He start His formal ministry? Jesus was 30-years-old when He started the worldwide revolution which we now call Christianity—a 30-year-old. Where's my 30-year-old? Come on up.

At 30-years-old He led a rag-tag group of disciples. Whenever I look at the images of the last supper; whenever I think of the stories of the biblical record, whenever I look at the early stages of the

Adventist Church, I always think of the old geezers, the bearded men, the people that are all receiving their second and third and fourth AARP subscription invoice.

But if you look at the vibrant faces that are in front of you. If you take a moment and think about these individuals here, Jesus was on to something.

He said, “I want to grow a church and I’m going to utilize young people, young adults, teenagers, twenty-somethings to start a revolution that will light the world on spiritual fire.”



I want to share with you a Scripture and I’d like for you to actually fill in the blanks here because you already know what’s supposed to go there. Let’s go back to 1 Timothy 4, verse 12, now in the New Living Translation. . . Whether you are a twenty-something, a young professional or a teenager who just graduated from high school. Whether you are an accomplished businessman or a thriving entrepreneur; whether you have reached the golden years and decided to retire, I want you to take a look at this verse. *“Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are old, because you are feeble, because you are rich, because you’re accomplished. Don’t let anyone think less of you; don’t let anyone despise you because you’re 20 and beautiful or 60 and gorgeous. Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are Seventh-day Adventists or a Dallas Cowboy fan. But all of you, every single one of you, be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.”*

YG church, why is this important? Why is growing young Adventists important? The reason that it’s important to us is because it’s important to Jesus. I think that’s enough reason, don’t you?

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<https://vimeo.com/224783474>*

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