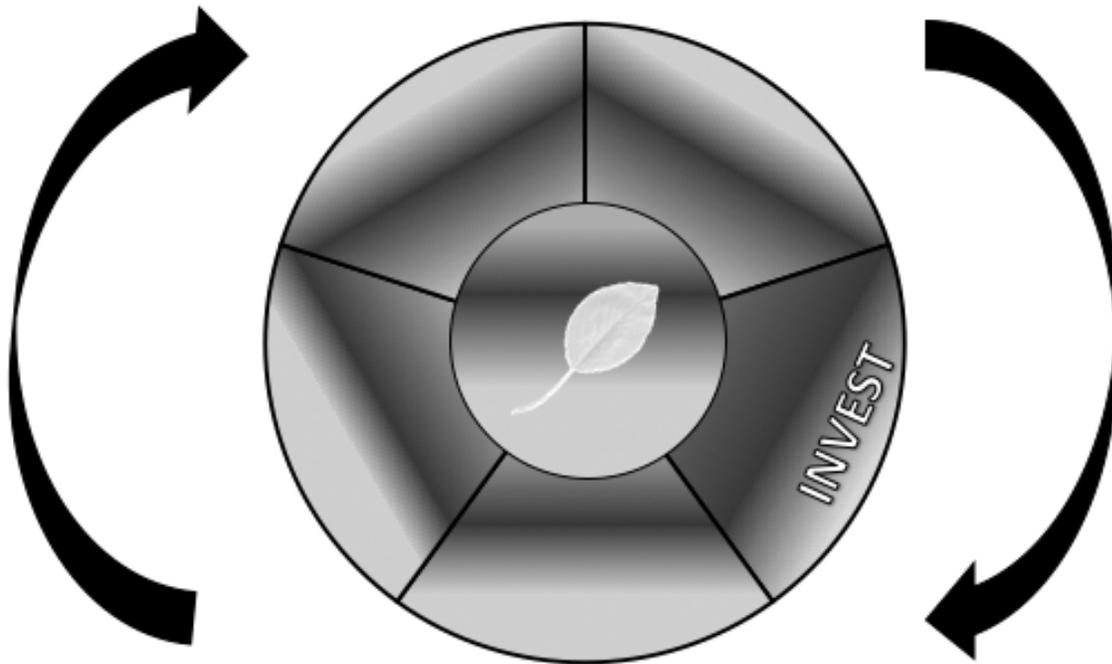


4. We will INVEST in the generations following us



As we consider this 4th essential, “Investing,” consider these questions and discuss them as a group.

- Why does God allow us to age? Why did He ordain the aging years as a part of life?
- What are His purposes in our aging years?
- What are the advantages for each of us in having older and younger people in our lives?
- What are the advantages of older people in the life of a congregation?

We’d like to suggest at least two ideas.

First, God wants us to keep growing and trusting Him for all that He wants to be to us and in us in our aging years. Regardless of the hardships we face in the later years, God wants us to keep growing, to keep connecting, and to keep caring and loving those He designs to be a part of our lives (that’s our summary of the first 3 essentials).

Second, we are convinced that one of the reasons God leaves us in this life for our aging years is for the purposes of investing our lives in the generations that follow us. The following key Scriptures bring this biblical truth and personal conviction into clear focus.

Investing in Future Generations

*O God, You have taught me from my youth,
And I still declare Your wondrous deeds.
And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me,
Until I declare Your strength to this generation,
Your power to all who are to come (Psalm 71.17-18).*

*One generation shall praise Your works to another
And shall declare Your mighty acts (Psalm 145.3).*

*For He established a testimony (a witness) in Jacob
And appointed a law (a standard) in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers
That they should teach them to their children,
That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born,
That they may arise and tell them to their children,
That they should put their confidence in God
And not forget the works of God,
But keep (obey) His commandments (Psalm 78.5-7).*

Crawford Loritts makes these 5 wonderful observations growing out of this text.

- 1. We need to be the patriarchs and matriarchs who will lead the way and call our families to trust God. God calls us to intentionally nurture and instill a “God-confidence” in the hearts of our grown kids and grandkids.
- 2. We are here to steward the vision of God from one generation to the next.
- 3. We will continue to teach our children building on decade after decade, telling the stories of God’s faithfulness, again and again.
- 4. We will press to fuel future generations with a passion for the character of God and a confidence in the truth of Scripture.

5. As parents and grandparents, we pray for the generations to come. We pray for our grandkids and our great grandkids. We pray for the generations that we will not see.

Consider the biblical patriarch Joseph and the blessing he was to the generations of his family at 110 years of age. He gave them a legacy of hope.

Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim's sons; also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph's knees. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob." Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here." So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt (Genesis 50.22-26). How is Joseph investing in his family?

Only heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons (Deuteronomy 4.9).

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6.5-9).

Describe what you believe these two passages teach about family life as we age.

For myself, I have typically thought about and taught these verses as though they applied primarily to children in our homes when they were younger, when they lived in our home. As I have aged, however, I now think that these verses are as appropriate to our adult children even as they were when our children were younger. We as older adults have the mission of continuing to teach and be living examples of faithfulness to our adult children and grandchildren as much as when our children were young.

Would you agree?

*It is the living who give thanks to You today, as I do today;
A father tells his sons about Your faithfulness (Isaiah 38.19)*

How do we talk with our grown/adult kids about God's faithfulness to us? In what ways might you be able to share God's faithfulness in your life to your adult children and grandchildren?

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28.19-20).

Making disciples is not optional. Discipleship is adult education. How do we as aging Christians keep making disciples at our age?

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2.1-3).

According to the apostle Paul's relationship with Timothy, what might he say our role is with our own adult children and/or with the younger generations of our church?

Now, do the following project together. What does “investing” your life into your adult children and/or younger adults in your congregation or community mean to you? What barriers keep us from doing this?

Investing	Barriers

Applied to Our Culture and the 6 Generations in Today’s World

- The Silent Generation
- The Greatest Generation
- Boomers
- Generation X
- Millennials
- Generation Y (iGeners)

Considering the generations following you, what kinds of things might you be able to do that would open doors to making investments into their lives?

In our own church community, how are we “discipling” younger people in the generations following us?

Speaking of the church, we need to be reminded that the church is a multigenerational organism. Investing into the generations that follow and surround us is a critical assignment for both life and church leadership. Are we doing that?

Furthermore, consider the challenge of multigenerational leadership and body life ministry from Acts 2.17:

*“AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS, God says,
 THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND;
 AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY,
 AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS,
 AND YOUR OLD MEN WILL DREAM DREAMS.”*

God's Spirit calls the generations to work together in building His church. Are we doing that? Are the dreams of "old men and old women" in your church valued in the work and future of your church?

Here are some thoughts from previous groups that discussed investing in generations following.

Ideas/Conversations about Investing

- Our families
- Friends at church
- Friends in our community – our profession
- Show an interest
- Invite them to your home for a meal
- Share your history/your story
- Write them
- Pray
- Anything/Everything
- Life History
- Hardships
- Gifts
- Text - Call
- Common interests – share your own interest

Dennis Rainey's book, Stepping Up: A Call to Courageous Manhood, chapters 4 & 5, and have been very helpful to me on this point. In his book, he lists 5 stages of manhood, but I only want to share the last two as those two stages address retiring boomers and seniors, the focus of Finishing Well Ministries. (While Rainey's book is addressed to men, I believe these principles apply equally to women as well as men.)

- The Fourth Step: Mentor
- The Fifth Step: Patriarch

Consider Rainey's words;

"A mentor is a life coach - a tutor and instructor who recognizes that he has the privilege and duty of passing a baton in a generational relay race. Stepping up and becoming a mentor can be one of the most definitive and courageous steps a man makes in his lifetime."

Every man needs a mentor, and every man needs to be a mentor. We need another man to speak into our lives, cheering us on, imparting the courage to persevere, summoning us to keep stepping up. In turn, we need to mentor others. This is our generational responsibility" (p.147)

"A mentor purposely builds life lessons into those he mentors. As you consider being a mentor, think through what makes life work for you – at work, at home, and in your relationship with Christ. What have you learned about the following?"

- Handling pressure and balancing the pace of life
- Working with people
- Building and keeping friendships with other men/women
- Investing in your marriage
- Resolving conflict
- Facing unexpected crises or tragedy
- Managing your finances
- Developing a real relationship with God
- Reading, understanding, and applying the Scriptures
- Raising your children
- Developing the type of character needed to succeed at work
- Growing through failure” (see Rainey, Stepping Up, pp.157-158).

Remember, reaching retirement age does not mean for one moment that we have the luxury of not continuing to pour our lives out for the generation following us. God calls every disciple to continue giving his life away for the blessing and encouragement of others.

In what ways might you consider the invitation and challenge of being a mentor to the younger generations around you in your church or community?

Consider these additional ideas for mentoring, taken from Vantagepoint3.org.

Mentoring: How daunting is the thought of becoming someone's mentor?

Breaking the sometimes-daunting perception of mentoring into smaller pieces can help us recognize the variety of ways mentoring happens.

- **Disciplers** help to develop basic skills for knowing and following Jesus.
- **Spiritual mentors** help others pay attention to the movement of God in their life.
- **Coaches** help develop skills and motivate people in real-life situations.
- **Counselors** help provide presence, processing, and clarifying perspectives.
- **Teachers** help provide knowledge and motivation for other's learning.
- **Sponsors** advocate for developing younger people or organizations.

How have you been uniquely wired to pay attention to and companion others?

Assignment:

What action steps might you consider making to INVEST in generations following you?

An important question: How does Satan work to keep us from Investing? I believe that the work of Satan will be greatly increased if he can keep us from investing in those coming behind us – beginning with our own families? Would you agree or disagree?
