



SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

A Refuge From the Spirit of the Age

How the Church Protects the Next
Generation, and Why It Matters

We cannot reverse the age, but like Jehoshabeath and Jehoiada we can create a refuge where the next generation is protected, consecrated and called, and when we take care of kids, God takes care of us.

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SERIES

We're Generationally Intentional, Week 1 of 2

MAIN TEXT

2 Chronicles 22:1-12

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Sermon Transcript

I have a lot to share with you this morning, and so I'm going to preach very quickly, because I have so much to share with you. If you will, join me in your Bibles this morning in 2 Chronicles chapter 22. 2 Chronicles chapter 22. I'm going to take you through a biblical account this morning of a man named Joash, who was a king of Judah, and I want to walk you through some of his life, especially how he was born and came into power. That's where I really want to highlight. We're going to look at Joash's origin story this morning in Jesus' name. But we're starting a brand new series today called We Are Generationally Intentional.

Generationally Intentional. This is a value that we are adding to our church here. We've been going through eight values that we are instituting as a church, and we've talked about three of them so far. We've talked about building everything on Jesus, and being relentlessly driven by the mission, and we've talked about the last six weeks being rooted in the Bible. And today we're adding this one, and that is that we are generationally intentional. And I want to be very clear when I talk about being generationally intentional. I am not talking about focusing on kids and youth.

I'm talking about being intentional about every generation that finds itself in our church. Now, I want to be very clear about this. I want to be careful how I say this, but not too careful, because then it ain't no fun. Amen. But y'all have to wake up. You're going to have to make up for it this morning and let that — what do they call that in the turkey? The tryptophan? You just got to let that ease out of your system and be ready to have some fun with me, because I'm ready to have some fun. But I am not wanting to be generationally intentional for the reason that a lot of people think pastors want to do that, and the reason that frankly a lot of pastors do want to do that.

There are a lot of churches where grandma and grandpa pay the bills. In fact, I'll never forget when I was a probably 19-year-old worship leader in a church. We had a church consultant come in and he said, "Son, you need to sing some hymns." And I'm a first generation convert at the time. I really didn't know them that well. I wasn't that good at them. And I said, "I'm trying to." He goes, "You need to do it, because the people who like that pay the bills." Well, I just want you to know that's not — I would not share this information with you, but if I were to share the information with you, you'd find out that is not the case.

In our church, that's not it. We don't have, you know, 60 grandmas in the back room giving us tooth fairy money. Amen. That's not what's happening. I want to be generationally intentional, not because it's financially prudent. I really could care less about that. I want to be generationally intentional because every generation, every person matters to the Lord. Amen. And I'm going to tell you, as a generationally intentional church, it's kind of like your family. Everything kind of in your house kind of revolves around your kids, their schedules, their stuff, what they want to do, what they want to eat.

I'm going to tell you right now, chicken tenders 3,000 days in a row. That's an impressive record to set. But it does revolve around them, but everybody in the house is remembered. Everybody in the house is remembered. And there will always be something in this house, even though we will be very focused on the next generation. I always want to make sure that we have something here at Saraland Church that ministers to every generation. I say from the nursery to the nursing home. And the reason I say that is because I found out that, you know, if you want to do nursing home ministry, it's a very easy ministry to do.

In fact, if you want to start the first campus, we'll do a satellite church in a nursing home. It won't cost hardly anything. I need a TV and a computer and somebody who will drive that stuff over there and set it up. I will preach and lead worship to these people via video every single Sunday. We can go to 10 campuses by the end of the year. Amen. I just need some willing vessels, hallelujah, and some televisions. Amen. But they're on sale right now. Hallelujah. I'm already off the rails. I've got to preach this message, but we're generationally intentional. All that to say, today my message is going to be very geared towards the next generation.

That being said, 2 Chronicles chapter 22, chapter 22, starting in verse one. It says, "And the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his place, for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had killed all the older sons. And Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram, king of Judah, reigned. Ahaziah was 22 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah." I want you to pay attention to this lady. "His mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly."

2 CHRONICLES 22:1-4 ESV

¹ And the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his place, for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned. ² Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri. ³ He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly. ⁴ He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as the house of Ahab had done. For after the death of his father they were his counselors, to his undoing.

Jumping down to verse 10. "Now when Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead" — so her son, who was the king, he dies — "she arose." This is Athaliah. "She arose and destroyed all the royal family of the house of Judah."

2 CHRONICLES 22:10 ESV

¹⁰ Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family of the house of Judah.

So her son, who is the king, dies, and she effectively goes in and wipes out any potential heir to the throne. And what she does, Athaliah, is she overthrows the leadership of Judah and she becomes the reigning person in the kingdom. She takes the throne in a way that is unethical, immoral, and it is against the institution that God has put in place, which is a lineage of kingship.

Okay. So I want to jump right in and start unpacking this for you. My message today is called "A Refuge From the Spirit of This Age." A refuge from the spirit of this age. And number one, the first thing I want to share with you this morning is that Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, she is a prophetic typology of the spirit of this age. She's a prophetic typology of the spirit of the age. And there is in every era, in every generation, in every era, in every season, there is an Athaliah spirit that rises up. The Athaliah spirit, it's the dominant mindset of the culture.

It is what is shaping young people's minds away from the Lord. It's effectively a counselor in doing wickedly. I'm going to take off my Apple Watch, and I just want to say to the internet, whoever is blowing my phone up right now, I'm preaching. Y'all know what time — it never shocked me. I'm a first generation convert. My family — can I give this to you? Because it's just going to buzz up here. My whole family are lost people. It never amazed me. These people be calling me at like nine o'clock in the morning on Sundays. You know what I do? Calling me all the time on Sunday mornings.

Let me be, I'm trying to work. Praise the Lord. All right. Sorry. We had to put them people in their place, but I feel like they know now. Leave me alone on Sundays. Amen. I'm here for you. Come on, give yourselves a hand. Amen. You've got to come on Sundays. If y'all can blow my phone up, if you feel like it. Amen. But an Athaliah spirit, it rises up in every generation. It turns the minds of a generation away from the Lord. It is what the Bible said about her to her son. It's a counselor in doing wickedly. It assists in wickedness.

It assists in distraction. It assists in turning people from the Lord. And surprisingly, we've already seen an example of what one is, because we all carry one in our pockets. It's a counselor in doing wickedly. And obviously it can be good. It can be helpful. And I'm for technology. I like technology. Technology is good. Technology is why I don't have a wire right now. Amen. I like that. Technology is a great thing, but it also can be a counselor in doing wickedly. It can distract you. In fact, social media companies design their platforms in a way — and I'm just going to pick on the phone for a minute, but the Athaliah spirit will raise up in all kinds of ways.

But social media companies actually designed their apps to entice your flesh. They do it through something called dopamine, which is a naturally occurring chemical in your body. It's a good thing, but social media is designed to release uncommon levels of dopamine in your body. Dopamine is a chemical that tells your brain, "That felt good. Go do it again." And so when you pick up your phone, your phone is designed to make you feel a certain way to keep you engaged, because the bottom line is it makes them more money. And so they want to keep you on that phone.

But up until about 20 years ago, the only way that you could get that type of artificial level of dopamine was through substance abuse. So in your pocket is something that is producing a chemical that is similar to a chemical that you could only produce in decades past if you were a drug addict. And we don't think anything about it. And now for us, we're adapting to this. We're learning this. But the next generation, this is a critical thing for them, because they're not coming into technology. They're being raised by these environments.

They're being raised by social media and YouTube and Netflix and TikTok and whatever else they come up with tomorrow. They're being raised by this stuff on a regular basis. And I even thought about this, that I am not someone who's been on the internet my whole life. Most of you have not been on the internet your whole life. I remember when I thought the internet was just a thing they talked about on television. Like, how can that be real? I even remember the first time we got the internet, and I was expecting to connect to the whole world. And I'm like, well, y'all, I can't really do anything with this.

It was pretty pointless there for the first couple of years. All it did was hog up a phone line. Amen. And again, it made a loud noise. That's all it did. In fact, I was looking this week and I had seen a clip. I'm going to share it with you in just a second. But have y'all ever seen — this was in 1994. It was on the Today Show, but it's Bryant Gumbel and Katie Couric. They could not figure out — they were like, "What is the internet?" And they couldn't figure out what the @ symbol in an email address was called. Have y'all ever seen it? Let me show you the clip.

“Go ahead and back now at 56 past. I wasn’t prepared to translate that, as I was doing that little tease with the A and then the ring around it. At. See, that’s what I said.” “Katie said she thought it was ‘about.’” “Yeah, but I’d never heard it. I’d never heard it said. I’d only seen the mark, but never heard it said. And then it sounded stupid when I said it. Violence at NBC.” “I’ve heard it around the lunchroom.” “There it is. Violence at NBC dot GE dot com. I mean, well, Allison should know. What is internet, anyway?” I don’t know if you heard the last thing he says. “What is the internet, anyway?”

That’s what most of us have come into. But I remember a day watching Jocelyn. She was little bitty and we had handed her an iPad, and probably the second time she ever picked it up, she could operate that thing better than I could. She’s never known an era with technology that you couldn’t touch the screen and it do something. This generation is wrapped up in it, and I’m going to tell you, the Athaliah spirit is attaching itself to this stuff. It is pervasive and it is grabbing this next generation. It’s a counselor in doing wickedly.

So number two, I want us to move on to 2 Chronicles chapter 22, verse 11. It says, “But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash, the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king’s sons who were about to be put to death. And she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, because she was the sister of Ahaziah, hid him from Athaliah” — that’s a lot of biblical names going on here — “so that she did not put him to death. And he remained with them six years hidden in the house of God, while Athaliah reigned over the land.”

2 CHRONICLES 22:11-12 ESV

¹¹ But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king’s sons who were about to be put to death, and she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram and wife of Jehoiada the priest, because she was a sister of Ahaziah, hid him from Athaliah, so that she did not put him to death. ¹² And he remained with them six years, hidden in the house of God, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

Okay. Now chapter 23, verse one says, “But in the seventh year Jehoiada the priest took courage and entered into a covenant with the commanders of hundreds: Azariah the son of Jeroham” — I changed out my — I put in phonetic spellings, and so I actually can’t read them when they’re phonetic. Let me just read it off the screen here. “Azariah the son of Jeroham, Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, Azariah the son of Obed, Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri.”

2 CHRONICLES 23:1 ESV

¹ But in the seventh year Jehoiada took courage and entered into a covenant with the commanders of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, Azariah the son of Obed, Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri.

That was much better that way. Go to the next verse. “

2 CHRONICLES 23:11 ESV

¹¹ Then they brought out the king's son and put the crown on him and gave him the testimony. And they proclaimed him king, and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and they said, "Long live the king."

Then they brought out the king's son and put the crown on him and gave him the testimony, and they proclaimed him king, and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and they said, 'Long live the king.'

Amen. You know, you're really saved when the Bible name written right makes more sense than the phonetic spelling. Amen. Hallelujah. Thank you, Lord, for the work you've done in my life, in Jesus' name. Amen. Number two, like Jehoshabeath and Jehoiada the priest, we protect kings for the kingdom. I'm sorry. We protect kids for the kingdom. We protect kids for the — this is our solemn duty as a church. Our solemn duty as a church is to protect the future of the kingdom of God on earth. Somebody say amen to that. Hallelujah. And one of the things we cannot do is we cannot reverse the age.

And I feel like these are the solutions that get tossed around, like go and get all the electronics out of your house and get rid of your phone. And you know, like somebody is going to clip a rotary phone on their belt or something and walk around and make phone calls. You know what? We can't do that. We can't reverse the age, but what we can do is we can create space for refuge. We can create space so that there are windows of time that the next generation can step away from the constant influence of the age, the constant influence of the spirit of the age, that Athaliah spirit constantly breathing down their neck — which, by the way, the only thing an Athaliah spirit wants to do is consume the next generation.

That's all that spirit wants to do. Just like it kills every heir to the throne. It wants to take out an entire generation of the kingdom. That's what it wants to do. But we can create a refuge where they don't have to sit under that constant influence, but rather they can separate themselves. We call that consecration. That's a biblical word for that. They can separate themselves and they can receive ministry in a way that encourages them, inspires them, equips them, trains them, prepares them, and even promotes them into their role as a kingdom ambassador in the earth.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20 ESV

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

I was talking to someone just a couple of weeks ago who is in our church, a young person in our church, who had an experience where they were called to business. I'm going to tell you, we do this "called to ministry" thing all the time, but let me tell you, folks, God has a call on every young person, and I'm telling you, they can get the call of God right here in the house of the Lord if we create space for that refuge. And we can't remove them from the culture, nor do we want to, but we can become a refuge from its influence. And I really believe this. And I'm going to talk to you some more about this in a moment, but I believe if we take care of kids, God will take care of us.

Amen. I want to share something with you that I can't share from the pulpit. And so I'm going to have to teleport into the TV screens. You cool with that? All right, let's go. Let's roll that video.

Church family, I'm standing here obviously in front of our building, and I just want to let you know, one of the greatest blessings of coming to Saraland Church and becoming the pastor here is that we have such a great asset in our property. Did you know that we have roughly 20 acres right here that we can use to reach this region with the gospel of Jesus Christ?

That's incredible. This building is actually a fantastic building, but it is nearing that 35-year mark. And friends, this building does need some help on the inside. And I want to walk you through a particular set of projects that I believe we need to conquer as soon as humanly possible. Heck, why not even not humanly possible? Let's do it as soon as godly possible, so we can reach this city with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is absolutely crucial. Let's go inside. So here at Saraland Church, we are generationally intentional, and we've been talking about the necessity of creating space for the next generation.

Not just a space, but a refuge from the spirit of this age. A refuge from the infiltrating culture that's trying to keep kids and teenagers away from the calling of God on their life to follow him and surrender their life to the Lord Jesus Christ. And one of the ways that we can make sure that we're creating a space is by simply bringing the space that we have up to a certain quality standard. Now, when we first got here, we instituted a secure check-in process. Every Sunday, our children come to this church and their parents or their guardians check them in, and nobody can get them from kids ministry unless they have a security tag.

And so the first thing that we do is we make sure our kids are safe. In fact, we shut this door. It's locked throughout the whole service. Nobody can just come in here and get children. Doesn't happen. So once we pass this door, however, there's still a lot of work to be done. So when you walk in, the first thing you'll notice is that these lights all down this hallway are all different colors, and so we're going to have to go through here and like get these lights looking the same. This is not a good first impression for parents or children. And so when you come in, we've got to fix that.

We have stains on a lot of these ceiling tiles. We need to replace every single ceiling tile we have in this nursery area. When you go into this room, which is probably one of the better rooms, this is our nursery, there's some things in there that need to be addressed. Like we've got holes in the drywall, and there's a television on the wall that doesn't work at all. We need to fix those things. But my real area of concern is when we get to the toddler room. The toddler room is not a great experience from top to bottom. Because when you first walk through this hallway, you can see someone had ripped a door off at some point, I'm guessing, and we never replaced any of this.

We never repaired any of this drywall. So we need to fix this. We need to fix the ceiling around that. Nobody should see this when they're dropping off their children. This does not communicate that we care about your kids. And we do care about kids, but we need to make sure we're communicating that. You walk right past this, you know, room that looks like it has a nuclear reactor behind it. So we need to just take this sign down, which might happen as soon as this video is over. So all right, we're already making progress. Praise the Lord. But when you come into this room, this is the toddler's room.

We have a lot going on in here. We've got a vent that's not in place. We've got probably, I'd say, at least 60 percent of the ceiling tiles in this room are stained. We've got broken fluorescent light guards. We've got dead bugs in the lights that needs to get handled. We've got a lot of older stuff on the ground that needs to get addressed. We have this sink that is stained and it doesn't quite work the way that it ought to. And we need to repair some of these things. Now, the good news is the flooring throughout this whole space is good and high quality flooring.

And we don't have to do anything about that. But if you wanted to know the one thing that really indicates kind of the condition of this area, I would say it's pointed out when you go to turn up the volume here in the room. So we'll just put that back in there for now, and we'll address that later on. When you come over to the other kids area, which is our older children in the nursery, obviously we need to clean this area up. But when you come in here, we've got a very cool space. But you know, this needs to get cleaned up as well. We need to put up a larger television.

These kids are getting older. And then, you know, some stuff — I'm sure this was well-meaning when it went up. This pin the tail on the donkey probably isn't the best we can do. And so we need to — I'm not even sure that we have tails for this donkey. In fact, maybe you could sow a tail in the vision offering this year, in Jesus' name. But this isn't our only children's space. No, in fact, we also have children's space upstairs. That's where our elementary kids are. And I want to take you there now. Oh, I thought I lost you there. Come on, come on, come on.

I thought I left you behind. So this area is what we're now calling the loft. This is where our elementary school kids come and receive ministry every Sunday morning. Now this room, this space is actually a really great space. I think we've got a lot of potential here, but we need to modernize this room a little bit. And I'm not talking about anything crazy, but you know, we've got the green floors and the yellow on the walls. I think we need to come through here, repaint these ceilings, because you're kind of seeing all of the white peeking through from when it was painted the first time.

So we need to paint this ceiling black. I think we need to paint these walls white, paint the floor gray, and create a nice neutral space that we can decorate with signage and banners and televisions. One of the neat things about this room, if we were to neutralize it just a little bit, create more of a multifunctional space, is this could not only be a kids area on Sunday morning, but during the week it could be a youth group meeting space. This is a perfect area for that. I know in the past we've had the youth meet over in the other room, but that's a little big when you may not have a super large youth ministry.

So as we grow our youth ministry again, this is a great smaller space where it doesn't feel super empty. And I think when we come in we'll clean some of this out, replace the projector with a television, and then also start to clean up some of this furniture in here. If I'm to be honest with you, the furniture in here kind of feels like we have given to the children the things that we no longer wanted in the rest of the church building. And so what we can do is come in and replace this with some of the furniture that we've been putting down in the foyer.

It's nice, it's sturdy, it looks modern, and when you walk in it looks and feels intentional. Then on top of that, when we come back in here, we've got this great space to have our kids, our older kids, and our teenagers to step out of the church room, if you will, and they've got some hangout space in here. We can put some couches, and on Sunday mornings we can have play areas for our elementary kids, but for our youth we have some couches, and maybe some games — maybe, I don't know, we'll put a video game on the wall. I don't know anything about video games, folks.

I pray and read the word. I don't know what to tell you. I don't know nothing about no Mario, bless God. But I think this would be a great area to create a multifunctional space. But we need to come through here and we need to clean up some of this. As you look around the room, you can see there's just a lot of junk in this room, and we need to clean that up. And I'm not saying that Buddy has to go. I'm just saying maybe Buddy needs a new sheet of paper. So as we move into our vision offering over the next week, I want to encourage you. We're sowing seed into the next generation.

We're creating space for a Joash generation, a refuge to protect them from the spirit of this age. They have all of this information coming at them every day from TikTok and Instagram and YouTube and school and movies and Netflix. And we need a space where they can come and they can retreat from the spirit of this age, and they can encounter the

powerful presence of the Holy Spirit and the love of God that has been shown through Jesus Christ. So when you give during this vision offering, I want you to know that this is the priority project we're going to be working on.

I'm talking about bringing these areas up to standard. We need to put some televisions in these areas, and making sure that our children are taken care of and they can be ministered to. And I know that this is a felt need in our church, because I haven't heard it from people in our community, but people in our church have shared with me, if our kids' spaces were up to standard, then our children and our grandchildren would be coming to church here. So let's take that step together and get these areas up to standard in this year's vision offering.

Hallelujah. How many of you are excited about what the Lord's doing in our church? Amen. Who's going to put a tail on that donkey in Jesus' name? He needs it. He's a little Eeyore. Amen. Well, I'm excited about what's happening. I want to continue on. Join me in 2 Chronicles chapter 24 and verse 4. It says, "After this, Joash decided to restore the house of the Lord."

2 CHRONICLES 24:4 ESV

⁴ After this Joash decided to restore the house of the LORD.

I want to say it again, that when we take care of kids, God will take care of us. And I have a lot of long-term vision that I'm going to share with you next year. I believe God wants to do a great work in and through this church.

And part of that does come with taking care of this facility. We have a great asset that we've been entrusted with for the kingdom. And part of my job as the pastor is to make sure that I put this property into a Holy Ghost juicer and get as much kingdom juice out of it as I can get. See, some days it looks like we're putting paint on the wall. That's souls. Paint goes on the wall — it's souls. When we take care of an air conditioner, that's not an air conditioner. That's souls. When we clean up the property, that's not cleaning up the property. That's souls.

When we pick up trash in the building and we put the trash away, that is not picking up trash. That's souls. See, we're in the soul business. And what we have here is no more than a utility for us to see more and more and more people go to heaven. And so I have a lot of stuff I want to share with you in the new year. But as we end 2025, I want you to know that we have some pressing need with our children's spaces. And I would say it's probably, if we cross the \$10,000 mark, we get the lion's share of what I just showed you done. This is not incredibly expensive.

The labor is incredibly cheap, because it's sitting right there. Amen. Hallelujah. So Jeff, just jump in an offering bucket next week. Hallelujah. We'll get a big one and we'll let you jump in there. But when we do these projects, when we do these projects, this is someone's son coming to know the Lord. This is someone's granddaughter coming to know the Lord. This is not — I'm not real interested in having the best building in the world, but I am interested in finding as many lost people as I can in this area. And the reality is, I know that there are people who go, "Why don't you just go out and minister to everybody?"

And I'm going to tell you why. 20 years of ministry has showed me that we can see substantially more people come to know Jesus by doing church really, really well than we can by sitting in Ruby Tuesday for an hour and a half and hoping God shows us somebody we need to talk to — and blessings on people who do that. But I'm not talking about getting one person a month. I'm talking about us seeing hundreds of people every month come to the Lord. And I know that that can be hard to see right now, because God knows I have stood up here and I have given altar calls since I've gotten

here, and me and the Lord have arm wrestled over this a little bit, because I've given altar calls and people aren't getting saved.

Well, we know why they aren't getting saved: because they aren't coming through the door. It's a foot traffic problem. You drop me anywhere in the nation, set me in the pulpit, I will give an altar call. I went to a friend of mine's church. It was the first church I went to after I started traveling again. I had taken years off, went to his church, in a church of 600 — 600 that morning, 61 people gave their life to Jesus Christ. I have a philosophy on this that if you give the invitation, people will respond. It's not a special anointing. If you'll just give people the opportunity, they'll get saved, unless they're not sitting in there.

So we have to do some things that create some trust and some foot traffic and some excitement. And one of the things that we have to do is we have to make sure that people that are in their late 20s, their 30s, even some people who are grandparents that are raising children — we have to make sure that we're doing things that signal you can trust us with your children. And one of the ways we can do that very simply is ceiling tiles. I had a friend — and I wasn't going to preach this, but just so y'all know, I am much more reserved until I stand up here, and then all bets are off.

Amen. But I had a friend who I sent what we wanted to do back here, and some more involved stuff that you'll see early next year. And he said, "You know, that's nice. I don't feel like I need a tetanus shot to go into your children's ministry area." You won't say that, because you love this church dearly. You won't say that, because you are the ride or die people. You're the ones that said, "No matter what, I'm hanging in there." People are moving here in droves because we've got school system. That's incredible. People ought to be throwing their children at our building, but it takes one time walking through, looking at it and going, "I don't think I'm going to do that."

And at the end of the day, I will tell you this, I know from experience — this is dangerous, by the way, that I'm down here. Amen. I know this from experience. People will give in on their Pentecostal theology. They will give in on their preference of their church. They will give in even on some of their sound biblical doctrine if a church has a kids ministry that they can trust their kids with. And it's a shame, but it's the reality. And I have found that the more supernatural a church is, the more spiritual a church is, the more children's ministry is an afterthought.

I know, because we would go into these churches — when I wasn't in local church ministry, we'd go into these churches and they'd be hooping and hollering in the altar, and I'd be scared to death about what was happening with my kids. We're having a good old time over here and they're out in a trailer. We're having a good old time in here. But when I look at the children's pastor, I'm not real sure the elevator goes to the top level. We've been in these situations. Well, what do you think you do in that moment? Well, you go over to the church where they preach the Bible, and maybe they don't have the full gospel experience, but I can at least drop my kids off and not worry about what I'm getting back.

People will make that decision every time. When we take care of kids, God will take care of us. And it's not an either/or. You don't have to sacrifice on the power of God to take care of kids. I don't know why churches do it, other than that people like us have a tendency to over-spiritualize everything. We walked into a children's ministry one morning — I'm glad none of y'all saw me in this moment, because I didn't respond well to it. We walked into a children's ministry one morning. And for those of y'all that don't know, Ali was born at 24 weeks. We thought she was going to die there at first.

We just did not think she was going to make it. And we had finally gotten her out of the hospital. It took three months. We finally got her out of the hospital. And within about — I'd say, what was it, about a month before we had to take her back? About a month, she got some respiratory thing, pertussis. She got pertussis. We had to take her back. She had to

go back into the hospital. Okay. Let me tell you, that was a lot harder of a trip. It was only a couple of days. That's a tougher one than when she just never came out of there. And so we drop her off.

Fast forward several years later, she's three, four years old. We go visit a church, what I had been told was the most Pentecostal church in our area and where we were living. I was desperate for this, because the Holy Ghost was not a snowbird, is what I learned. Amen. He didn't come down to a lot of them churches. And so we went to the most — I'm talking the church, I think they even had "revival" in the name. I don't know. I don't remember. I'll be honest with you, if I knew, I'd say the name right here on video. We go up to check the kids into the kids' ministry.

And the lady at the front desk lets us know that they had — I don't remember what it was, but it was something that's incredibly viral, respiratory thing. A kid had come in there with it, and they found out and they got him out. And she was telling us that this had happened, and the way they solved it — she looked at me and she goes, "But it's okay. We pled the blood of Jesus." Which, I'm all for. I think Jesus ought to be your first phone call. But when it comes to my kids, I don't want to hear that. I want to hear how many gallons of Lysol have you used. This is important.

Kids matter on every front. Kids matter because they matter, because their parents matter, because grandma matters, great grandma matters. And if we don't start with the kids, if we don't get that thing right. So that's what we're going to ask you to do as we move into the next week. We're going to ask you to ask the Lord what he would have you give. Ask the Lord. Don't ask me, because I'm going to tell you 10,000. I've got the number. You don't want to ask me. Ask the Lord, "What would you have me give?" And I'm going to share this. This is in my notes. I want y'all to know I'm not just feeling loose right now.

I'd really struggled with whether or not I was ever going to share this. But I had a pastor who I greatly respect, and I've kind of watched him model this with his church, and I want to model this for you today. I understand the misconception about churches and finances. I get it. I want you to know, I was in the barbershop one time. I don't announce every room I go into that I'm a pastor. In fact, when Jocelyn was little, she talked to everybody. Everywhere we'd be in the checkout line, she'd be telling them everything but her blood type. And then she'd go, "And my dad, he's a pastor."

I said, "Baby, you can't do that. I have to talk to these people when you say that." So I don't announce that I'm a pastor everywhere I go. But you know, some people just can tell. But I was sitting in the barbershop and they didn't know, and I'm listening to them have a conversation on church finances. You want to talk about the dumbest, brain dead conversation I've ever heard in my life? Because you don't know unless you know. But I know everybody's got a misconception on it. I know everybody thinks I came here in a helicopter this morning. I didn't. It's in the shop.

I mean, we got problems too. Amen. So I know there's all these misconceptions. Where does the money go? When we give, what happens with that? And we're working on being very transparent with you on that, especially coming into the new year. But when I got here, I want you to know some things that transpired for us to come. We came here, we gave up about half of our salary to come here. I took a close to 50% pay cut to take over this church. And I only had to go into the office — I hope Pastor Sawyer ain't watching — but I only had to go in there about three hours a week.

So, you know, I'm here all the time and I'm getting paid less. So I gave up a pretty good cushy thing. And so I gave up a lot of money to come. And on top of that, last year we started to have some major issues in our number one income producing source. We started to watch that trend go down and down and down, to the point that it was getting scary. And I want you to know, those numbers were scary when I said, "Yes, I'll take a 50% pay cut." We didn't come here at the best time for us financially. About three days after I preached my first message, we made a decision and we sowed a \$12,000 seed into the church.

We gave \$12,000. This is the first time we've ever talked about it in public. Jocelyn is finding out about this right now. We just don't talk about it. But I want you to know, I'm not asking you to sow into the ministry because I get a bonus. If I got a bonus, the offerings would be way longer. I'd spend a good 30 minutes on them every week. Amen. But that's not what happens. I'm asking you to sow. I'm asking you to ask the Lord what he would have you do. Because if this church is going to move forward, if we're going to go to the next level, if we're going to do what God has called us to do, someone has to sow seed.

But here's what I also want you to know. We sow this \$12,000 seed into the church, and out of nowhere Ashleigh starts going, "I think I've got to make a change." Just for the record, I had been pushing a change for a long time, and Ashleigh had said, "I'm not making a move. I'm not going to transition. I'm not going to do anything." We sow this seed. Ashleigh makes a shift in her business that was scary. By the way, we walked away from money we knew we were going to have coming in, made a major change. And we have seen God reverse the trajectory of our income in only five weeks.

If you have a need this morning, there's a seed for that. Y'all remember, "There's an app for that"? But there's a seed for that. And I did not sow seed intentionally into the church — I want you to know. I gave a \$12,000 offering because the church needed like \$12,000. Like it needed to happen. And I still reaped off of it. But as we move towards 2026, some of you — and I do not push on this hard, but I need you to hear this — some of you have something you need God to do in your life that has gone outside of the normal purview of prayer. You need major breakthrough.

And I believe that there is a seed to meet that need. And you need to ask the Lord what he would have you give. And then you need to take a supernatural iron press. You need to press that name into that seed, and you need to sow it, and watch God do an incredible work in your life.

GALATIANS 6:7 ESV

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-10 ESV

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." ¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

A week from today, we're going to receive a vision offering for 2025. Why are we calling it that? Because we've got vision and now we need provision. And if you don't give, that's fine. There is no pressure. We're going to sign you up for all kinds of telemarketer stuff. That turkey's got y'all.

Y'all got to let loose a little bit. But if you don't give, that's fine. If God doesn't impress on you to give, that's fine. If you give \$5, that's fine. If you give \$5,000, that's fine. Whatever the Lord would have you do, we're going to seek him over the next week and we're going to ask him. Amen. Amen. Because when we take care of kids, God takes care of us. Amen. Hallelujah. If you received the word this morning, give the Lord a hand clap of praise.

Preaching Notes

Before You Preach

This message opens a two-week series on one of the church's values: we are generationally intentional. It walks through the origin story of King Joash in 2 Chronicles 22 to 24, reads Athaliah as a picture of the spirit of the age, and lands on a practical ask: invest in the spaces where children receive ministry.

The message was preached the Sunday before a year-end vision offering, and a recorded walkthrough of the children's areas played in the middle of it. If you preach it, replace that walkthrough with your own church's real need. The point is not the building. The point is that parents need to see they can trust you with their kids.

Be clear early that "generationally intentional" does not mean "only kids and youth." It means every generation in the house is remembered, from the nursery to the nursing home. Keep the tone warm and fast. There are a lot of names in the reading, so put the text on screen.

Introduction

We are generationally intentional. That is not the same as focusing only on kids and youth. It means being intentional about every generation that finds itself in our church.

There is a wrong reason to care about generations. Years ago, as a 19-year-old worship leader, Pastor Jason was told by a church consultant, "Son, you need to sing some hymns... because the people who like that pay the bills." That is not why we do it. We are generationally intentional because every generation, every person, matters to the Lord.

Illustration: the family table. A generationally intentional church is like a family. Everything in the house tends to revolve around the kids: their schedules, their stuff, what they want to eat (chicken tenders 3,000 days in a row). But everybody in the house is remembered. From the nursery to the nursing home, there will always be something here that ministers to every generation.

Today's message leans toward the next generation. We are going to look at the origin story of a king named Joash.

2 CHRONICLES 22:1-4 ESV

¹ And the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his place, for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned. ² Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri. ³ He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly. ⁴ He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as the house of Ahab had done. For after the death of his father they were his counselors, to his undoing.

Pay attention to this woman. Her son's mother "was his counselor in doing wickedly" (2 Chronicles 22:3).

2 CHRONICLES 22:10 ESV

¹⁰ Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family of the house of Judah.

When her son the king dies, Athaliah wipes out every potential heir to the throne and takes the kingdom for herself. It is unethical, immoral and against the order God had put in place, a lineage of kings.

1. Athaliah Is a Picture of the Spirit of the Age

Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, is a prophetic typology of the spirit of the age. In every era, in every generation, in every season, an Athaliah spirit rises up. It is the dominant mindset of the culture, and it shapes young people's minds away from the Lord.

Notice what the text calls her: a counselor in doing wickedly. The Athaliah spirit assists in wickedness. It assists in distraction. It assists in turning people from the Lord. And it wants one thing: to consume the next generation, the way Athaliah killed every heir to the throne.

THE COUNSELOR IN YOUR POCKET

We all carry one in our pockets. Technology is not evil. It can be good and helpful, and there is nothing wrong with using it. But it can also be a counselor in doing wickedly.

Social media companies design their apps to keep you engaged, because engagement makes them money. They do it through dopamine, a naturally occurring chemical that tells your brain, "That felt good. Go do it again." Dopamine itself is good, but these apps are built to trigger it again and again. Not long ago, that kind of artificial rush was something people mostly chased through substance abuse. Now it sits in your pocket, and we hardly think about it.

For adults, this is something we are adapting to. For the next generation, it is the water they swim in. They are not coming into technology. They are being raised by it: social media, YouTube, Netflix, TikTok and whatever comes

out tomorrow.

Illustration: “What is the internet, anyway?” In 1994, on the Today Show, Bryant Gumbel and Katie Couric could not work out what the “@” in an email address was called, and one of them finally asked, “What is the internet, anyway?” (Pastor Jason played the clip.) Most adults in the room came into that world from the outside. Contrast that with a toddler handed an iPad who can work it better than her dad by the second time she picks it up. She has never known a screen you could not touch.

This generation is wrapped up in it, and the Athaliah spirit is attaching itself to it. It is pervasive, and it is grabbing the next generation.

2. We Protect Kids for the Kingdom

2 CHRONICLES 22:11-12 ESV

¹¹ But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king’s sons who were about to be put to death, and she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram and wife of Jehoiada the priest, because she was a sister of Ahaziah, hid him from Athaliah, so that she did not put him to death. ¹² And he remained with them six years, hidden in the house of God, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

2 CHRONICLES 23:1 ESV

¹ But in the seventh year Jehoiada took courage and entered into a covenant with the commanders of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, Azariah the son of Obed, Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri.

2 CHRONICLES 23:11 ESV

¹¹ Then they brought out the king’s son and put the crown on him and gave him the testimony. And they proclaimed him king, and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and they said, “Long live the king.”

Like Jehoshabeath and Jehoiada the priest, we protect kids for the kingdom. This is our solemn duty as a church: to protect the future of the kingdom of God on earth.

WE CANNOT REVERSE THE AGE

The solutions that get tossed around often sound like this: get every electronic device out of the house, get rid of your phone. Nobody is going to clip a rotary phone to their belt. We cannot reverse the age.

WE CAN CREATE A REFUGE

What we can do is create space for refuge: windows of time when the next generation steps away from the constant influence of the age, from that Athaliah spirit breathing down their neck.

The Bible has a word for separating yourself to the Lord: consecration. In that space, young people can receive ministry that encourages them, inspires them, equips them, trains them, prepares them, and even promotes them into their role as kingdom ambassadors. “We are ambassadors for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Illustration: called to business. A young person in the church recently sensed a call of God to business. We talk about being “called to ministry,” but God has a call on every young person, and they can receive it in the house of the Lord if we create space for that refuge.

We cannot remove them from the culture, and we do not want to. But we can become a refuge from its influence.

When we take care of kids, God will take care of us.

3. When We Take Care of Kids, God Takes Care of Us

SHOW THE NEED

At this point Pastor Jason played a recorded walkthrough of the church’s children’s spaces. Use your own church’s need here.

In the walkthrough he showed what parents see when they drop off their children: a secure check-in and a locked door (the first priority is that kids are safe), and then the work still to be done. Mismatched lights down the hallway. Stained ceiling tiles. Holes in drywall, a broken television, a missing door frame that was never repaired. A toddler room with a loose vent, broken light guards and a sink that does not work right. An elementary room, “the loft,” with dated colors and hand-me-down furniture that could become a modern, multipurpose space for kids on Sunday and youth during the week.

His summary: “This does not communicate that we care about your kids. And we do care about kids, but we need to make sure we’re communicating that.” People in the church had told him that if the children’s spaces were up to standard, their children and grandchildren would come.

JOASH RESTORES THE HOUSE

2 CHRONICLES 24:4 ESV

⁴ After this Joash decided to restore the house of the LORD.

The child who was protected in the house of God grows up to restore the house of God.

Part of a pastor’s job is to steward the property God has entrusted to the church and get as much kingdom fruit out of it as possible. Some days it looks like paint going on a wall. That is souls. Fixing an air conditioner is not

about an air conditioner. That is souls. Picking up trash in the building is not about trash. That is souls. We are in the soul business, and the building is no more than a utility for seeing more and more people go to heaven.

Every one of these projects is someone's son or someone's granddaughter coming to know the Lord.

IT IS A FOOT TRAFFIC PROBLEM

Some ask, "Why not just go out and minister to everybody?" Twenty years of ministry have shown Pastor Jason that a church can see substantially more people come to Jesus by doing church really well.

Illustration: the altar call. Pastor Jason has given altar calls from this pulpit and not seen people respond, and he has wrestled with the Lord over it. The reason is simple: they are not coming through the door. At a friend's church, on the first Sunday after he started traveling again, 61 of the 600 people present gave their lives to Jesus. If you give people the opportunity, they will respond. It is not a special anointing. They just have to be in the room.

So we have to do things that build trust, foot traffic and excitement, and one of the simplest is signaling to young parents, and to grandparents raising children, that they can trust us with their kids. Sometimes that starts with ceiling tiles.

Illustration: the tetanus shot. A friend who saw the plans said, "You know, that's nice. I don't feel like I need a tetanus shot to go into your children's ministry area." Church members will not say that, because they love the church. But a young family walking through for the first time might decide, "I don't think I'm going to do that."

PARENTS DECIDE ON KIDS MINISTRY

People will give in on their Pentecostal theology. They will give in on their church preference. They will give in even on some sound biblical doctrine if a church has a kids ministry they can trust their kids with. It is a shame, but it is the reality.

And too often, the more spiritual a church is, the more children's ministry becomes an afterthought. Parents end up choosing the church where they can drop off their kids without worrying, even if it does not have the full gospel experience. It does not have to be either/or. You do not have to sacrifice the power of God to take care of kids.

Illustration: "We pled the blood." Pastor Jason and Ashleigh's daughter Ali was born at 24 weeks and spent three months in the hospital. About a month after coming home she caught pertussis and had to go back. Years later, visiting what they had been told was the most Pentecostal church in the area, they went to check in their kids, and the woman at the desk told them a child with a highly contagious respiratory illness had just been in the room. "But it's okay. We pled the blood of Jesus." Jesus ought to be your first phone call. But as a parent, he wanted to hear how many gallons of Lysol they had used.

Kids matter on every front: because they matter, because their parents matter, because grandma and great-grandma matter.

4. Ask the Lord What to Give

Ask the Lord, not the pastor, what He would have you give.

MODELING GENEROSITY

Pastor Jason chose to share this from his notes, following the example of a pastor he respects. There are a lot of misconceptions about churches and money. To come to this church, his family took close to a 50% pay cut, at a time when their main source of income was declining. About three days after his first sermon here, they sowed a \$12,000 seed into the church, because the church needed it. It was the first time they had spoken about it publicly.

Soon after, Ashleigh made a scary change in her business, walking away from income they knew was coming, and within five weeks they saw God reverse the trajectory of their income.

He is not asking because he gets a bonus. He is asking because if the church is going to go to the next level, someone has to sow seed. God “is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

THERE IS A SEED FOR THAT

You remember “There’s an app for that.” There is a seed for that. Some of you need God to do something that has gone beyond the normal reach of prayer. You need a major breakthrough. Ask the Lord what He would have you give, press that need into the seed, sow it, and watch God work. “He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing” (2 Corinthians 9:10).

NO PRESSURE

A week from today, the church will receive its vision offering. Why call it that? Because we have vision, and now we need provision. If you do not give, that is fine. If you give \$5, that is fine. If you give \$5,000, that is fine. Seek the Lord this week and do whatever He asks.

Conclusion

The spirit of the age is real, and it wants to consume the next generation. We cannot reverse the age. But like Jehoshabeath and Jehoiada, we can hide a generation in the house of God, consecrate them, and one day bring them out with a crown on their head. And the child protected in the house will grow up to restore the house.

When we take care of kids, God will take care of us.

Close in praise.

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

2 CHRONICLES 22:1-4

¹ And the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his place, for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned. ² Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Athaliah, the granddaughter of Omri. ³ He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly. ⁴ He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as the house of Ahab had done. For after the death of his father they were his counselors, to his undoing.

2 CHRONICLES 22:10

¹⁰ Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family of the house of Judah.

2 CHRONICLES 22:11-12

¹¹ But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king's sons who were about to be put to death, and she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram and wife of Jehoiada the priest, because she was a sister of Ahaziah, hid him from Athaliah, so that she did not put him to death. ¹² And he remained with them six years, hidden in the house of God, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

2 CHRONICLES 23:1

¹ But in the seventh year Jehoiada took courage and entered into a covenant with the commanders of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, Azariah the son of Obed, Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri.

2 CHRONICLES 23:11

¹¹ Then they brought out the king's son and put the crown on him and gave him the testimony. And they proclaimed him king, and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and they said, "Long live the king."

2 CHRONICLES 24:4

⁴ After this Joash decided to restore the house of the LORD.

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

2 CORINTHIANS
5:20

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

GALATIANS 6:7

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

2 CORINTHIANS
9:6-10

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” ¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.



Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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