

The Now Generation

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

Speaker: Levi Suffel

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Good morning church. It is a wonderful day to be here together, isn't it? I do not take for granted this amazing opportunity to be able to come and speak to you today. And in this church with a long and rich history, it is not lost on me. What a great honor this is. A couple of years ago, I was the speaker for a youth rally that we had here. I don't know if you've heard of mega knight, but Megan knight travels to different churches, local youth groups in the area.

And I spoke right here on this carpet here and even maybe even broke some China on the floor. The students could tell you. But I had no idea that God will just take you anywhere, and here I find myself in that same spot. And I'm very honored. I'm very happy to be here today. So this June marked the beginning of year number 16 for me working with middle school and high school students. I've been involved with the church much longer than that, but in a formal like you're the youth leader kind of setting year number 16 and let me tell you, I've seen a lot in those 16 years.

And more than that, I've heard a lot. And not just from the kids. And there is certainly a trend you ever heard people see. These kids these days oh, these kids these days, they're lazy. They're entitled. They think they get whatever they want, and they don't have to work for it. They're terrible employees. You know that there's actually some fast food employers, if you work for them, you go on the app and you make your own schedule.

You want to work Thursday, then schedule yourself. If you don't want to work for two weeks, you don't have to. These kids these days. They're disconnected from the real world. There are always staring at their phones. There's no loyalty to work. There's no loyalty to the church. They're not ready for the world. They're not ready for the workforce. I'm not going to make you raise your hand if you said any of those things out loud. I won't throw you out quite under the bus because you'll see here my points later.

We hear a lot about these kids these stairs is a lot of focus on what are these kids going to do? How is the world going to work out for them? But I think a lot of these conversations and a lot of our concerns, they start here. They start with our own worry, that deep emotion, we're worried about these kids, we're worried that they're not going to be ready. We're worried that what are they going to do with this world that we left for them?

All those everything that all the people before them that are handing them this world, how are they going to make it? If I put a microphone up here and said, all right, anyone who can tell me anything that you're worried about these kids these days. Tell me a memory of when your kids made you worried or when they were a disappointment. We'd be here till Tuesday, wouldn't we? Like, we know we know the trouble of these kids these days.

It wouldn't be difficult to find somebody to share their concerns. And that worry, and that disappointment, it's normal, isn't it? And it's really much bigger than just this single generation. It's not just about these kids these days. It's about everything that's at stake. It's about everything that like I already said. Everything it took for us to come to this world where we enjoy these freedoms and we enjoy faith in God and this beautiful church building and everything.

And we're going to need to hand it over to these kids these days. How are these kids these days going to change the world? For good, for bad. Now, I might only be speaking for myself, but I bet there's somebody else in the room that has this kind of flaw. That when we look at our children or our grandchildren, whatever age they are, we project onto them, our own successes, and our own failures.

I remember when it occurred to me, I see my success as a man as a youth pastor as a father, on the character of my children. And if I see things in them, I don't like. That's something I don't like about myself. And I take it personally. I remember like, I have not raised you like that. Have you ever said that before? This is not you. And it becomes about us.

We project onto them, our insecurities, and our failures, and hopefully our successes. Why do you think so many people want to see their kids succeed in sports or in band or whatever else? Because we live vicariously through their failures and through their successes. But is that really fair? I mean, they already have to figure out who they are as a person and how God has created them, but now they also needed to fulfill our shortcomings.

We kind of do that. Man, when I realized that, that was a punch in the gut. Oh, Levi. That's unneeded pressure. That is a recipe for guaranteed disappointment. If I rely on my children to be the reason I'm successful or not. So in an interview on his 100th birthday, there was a World War II veteran named Carl decal. And as they were interviewing him, he made it to live a hundred years. Not very many people get to do that.

But in an interview, they did this whole video interview for a Fox News station, and Carl said the greatest thing he ever did was fight for his country in World War II. And as the video interview continues to unfold, he's talking about the world that he used to live in, and his whole demeanor changes as voice cracks.

You can see the life sucked out of his face when he says, people don't realize what they have, the things we did and the things we fought for. And the boys that died for it. It's all gone down the drain. Is that a sentiment you hear? I certainly hear that sentiment. This man is all but sobbing in this interview, as he says, we haven't got the country we had when I was raised, not at all.

Nobody will have the fun I had, he says, nobody will have the opportunity I had, it's just not the same. And that's not what our boys, that's not what they died for. He's completely deflated. He's without hope. They're celebrating this man's long life and all the things he's seen and he's just completely deflated. And he says, I guess I shouldn't worry about it.

I'm a hundred years old, they say. Now, I just turned 40 this year, so I can't even begin to share some of the stories that he has seen over the last hundred years. I mean, he probably remembers his neighbors getting electricity. Look, the whole block has running water now. He can tell some stories. But I can certainly remember the last 30, 30, 35 of those last 40 years, right?

But he's got this whole life and everything he's seen. And really, this was towards the end of his life he did not make it to his 101st birthday. And here he is completely deflated and without hope and saying, I'm a hundred years old, why does it matter? You may not be a hundred, but some of us might already feel that that defeat already. And we're bringing our kids into this world and many of us are already defeated.

We've already decided that there isn't any way to fix this. So let's just try to survive it. The thing is, that worry, it leads to defeat. You're already defeated, there's no victory in sight. We've already decided ahead of time before we fought before we tried. The things that we've worked hard for matter to us when we lose them, but some of us are okay as we watch them, get lost around us.

But here's a funny little twist in all of this. These kids these days. Barna did a study, the Barnard group, they did a study, and they asked kids of the newest generation of the like the Gen Z as they're being

called right now, at least. And they found that 87% of the students believe their generation has the ability to make a positive, meaningful impact on the world when they were asked, do you think you can change the world 87% said, yes.

Where are the people that are going to do it? So can we, as the church, afford to have any of us saying that they're wrong about that? Or do we need to be the ones that are telling them yes? You're going to be the one that makes the difference. And you're the one that's going to carry this world into a better place following Jesus. You can make the difference in the world, and I'm going to be the one to empower you and disciple you and to give you the resources you need to make the change with the only one who can really make that change.

Sunday school answer. We're talking about Jesus. And John, the 16, here's a classic verse we've heard many times before. Jesus is saying, I have told you these things so that in me, you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble, but take heart. I have overcome the world. Now, a little bit of context, what was going on, where was Jesus even this world?

What was his cultural context? Let's think about that time in history. He was in a Rome occupied Israel, his entire country was overthrown. Corrupt leaders in his people and in the Roman culture, speaking of the Roman culture, it was not historically known to be wholesome. The things that were happening in his world, I would argue our worst than they are now. Worse than we're living in now.

Because I get to come into this church and speak the truth and love. And I'm not worried about a Roman soldier coming in here and doing anything. So Jesus was not speaking just for us. He was speaking to his contemporary audience. There's going to be trouble. And in the middle of that trouble, Jesus brings that piece. So if we're worried about our kids, that's the first thing we need to address, to stop worrying about them. Jesus is already the answer. He has already brought that victory. We are already more than conquerors.

Amen? Okay. We didn't say amen. I was going to attack ten minutes on the end. So it was a good move. So worry for this audience was a real thing. Being shot down and pushed down was a real thing for Jesus audience. And he said, I'm going to bring you peace. It's only going to get worse, and I'm still going to bring you peace. But Jesus knew that this wasn't enough. Do you think he just had to say something once? And we're like, oh, Jesus said to have peace. We're good.

No, because you knew there would be men in the audience. And we need to hear things more than once. Amen, we do, I know. It's true. So in he knew that we would keep worrying, he knew that we would be wrapped up in this, what's going to happen next? So he said this here. Matthew 6, but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow. Like, don't just don't worry. How much do you worry?

None. I'm not worried. Like literally don't worry about tomorrow for tomorrow. We'll worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Let's go back through this verse. And kind of plug in some of our worries as we read it again. So as I'm raising my kids and I don't know what's coming next, I will seek first his kingdom. When it doesn't seem like they know the right way to go, and there's no hope. I will seek his righteousness.

When I'm not sure how things are going to unfold and how the needs of my children are going to be met or how this relationship will be Mended, all those things will give to me and I already know that. So I don't have to worry. You see, worry is the opposite of seeking his kingdom. And being afraid is the opposite of seeking his righteousness, because God already said, I got you. I got you. You don't have to worry about this.

Worry is a real worry is a dangerous thing because here's what it does. We do some really foolish things when we're worried. We don't live out who God has called us to be when we're worried. In Luke 18, Jesus says, listen, this is their kingdom now. People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them.

I don't know about you, but if I knew the messiah was on earth during my lifetime, I'm going to take my kids and go see him. Oh, yes, I will. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them, but Jesus called the children to him and said, let the little children come to me. Do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs present tense to such as these truly I tell you anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.

I love this because the disciples are taking things into their own hands and I'm like, well, this is the way we do it. And Jesus, he didn't rebuke the disciples right away. He first went, hey, come here. He called the children to himself directly. He didn't say, well, I have my grandchildren. You know, Jesus doesn't have grandchildren. God does not have any grandchildren. Some of you have heard that before. You're nodding your heads.

And what I mean by that is there is no relationship through Jesus through my parents and then to God. Jesus calls each of us individually and he starts with a little children. Jesus called the children to him and said, let them come to me and do not hinder them. Why does he need to mention that? Because sometimes we do hinder them. We're the reason that they don't find Jesus. Jesus, welcome to children, but he also said, let's learn something from them.

These children are part of your faith journey. You learn from them how to approach faith. The kingdom faith right there from the beginning was seen in children. Kingdom, faith, children. They are part of the kingdom of God, now the kingdom of God belongs to the children now. They are citizens of heaven. They are the kingdom of God.

So if you are around me enough, if you're ever in this building and you see I'll be walking through fear of your kids or dismissing kids from youth group upstairs, you'll hear me say this, there goes the church. There goes the church of today. There goes, you never hear me say, there goes our future, or man, that is the church of tomorrow. Oh, I do not like that you see. The church of tomorrow, that's my grandchildren. They're not born yet.

My oldest is 14, so thank you, lord. I don't have any grandchildren. That's the church of tomorrow. The church of today is in this building right now. From babies to whatever age we go up to in this room, right? They encouraging part is God has given us that hope. And we know that hope.

But we need to share it. We need to model it. See, the world isn't waiting for our kids to get old enough to start discipling them. They're not waiting until they're the right age, or they're adults to start saying, all right, you're the world, the world is discipling them now. And whenever we fail to do the world will fill in whatever blanks we leave, guarantee you that.

Now, that World War II veteran, Carl deckle, and the lowest saddest part of the video, I mean, you see a broken, sad, deflated man. His daughter, Emily, apparently was there for the whole video interview, and you just see her arm reach in and grab his arm, and she say, now it's my fight. Now it will be my fight. For the now generation.

Now, it is my fight. As a fly. Goodness. You have never seen a man's face, change so quickly. He was sobbing. He was sobbing on this camera, and then in a matter of a few seconds, hearing now it is my fight. Just a few words from Emily. His face totally lit up. Total change of character.

And the next words out of his mouth were well okay. You just remember everything's beautiful. And live every day to the fullest. Just enjoy everything you possibly can. That granddaughter ministered to him. See, in study after study and experiment after experiment, we find that the higher expectations that we place onto people, but more consistently, they will raise themselves to reach those expectations.

One study, lots of teachers know this study, because I've talked about this with teachers before, but they took this group of students, and they gave them all a placement test. Now, it was a real test, but they were doing an experiment with the results. So instead of looking at the actual results and seeing how the different students scored on that test, they just split the group down the middle. Arbitrarily, no rhyme or reason, and took half of the group and said, listen, you guys.

Wow. You scored so high on this test. You are like advanced, you're advanced, okay? All of you in this room, the test scores show it. You got it. We're going to put you in an advanced class. It's going to be more challenging, but you guys need to challenge. Because you're just that brilliant. Now, some of the people in this study scored poorly on that placement test. Now, the other group, they went over and they're like, oh, man.

I mean, bless your heart. I'm filling in my own little words here if you haven't figured that out. Oh, you guys, granted, this group included people who scored well on this test. Oh, you guys. Well, that test was rough. It was rough. But we know that you guys, we're going to put you in this separate class here. And we're going to give you some extra help because you need extra help, okay? And that's my paraphrase, at least.

And do you know what they saw out of these two groups? The group over here that was told how amazing they did and were given higher expectations, they flourished, all of them were doing so well in the class, and when they retook that assessment, they all scored higher. And then the other class that was told, nice try guys that was sweet. All of them struggled in their class. And when they retook the test, even the kids that had scored higher, all of them scored lower in that test because of what was expected of them.

And what they thought they were capable of. You see, there's more than one word, one more than one use of the word generation. One of the words we use for generation, which is most commonly used now, refers to a group of people that are born somewhere in the same ten or 18 years somewhere in there. We have the greatest generation. We have the baby boomers. In which all the younger people just call you boomers now in case you and that's not a compliment.

Just in case you were wondering. Boomer. Correct them. They shouldn't say that. But we have the boomers that we have Generation X and Y and Z and millennials and whatever else. But there is another use for the word generation. You'll find in the dictionary. And that refers to any group of people that live in the earth at the same time. So guess what? This building only has one generation.

This church is definitely old enough that there was a time when absolutely none of us were here and a completely different group of people. Maybe not in this building, but at a completely different group of people at Fairview missionary church inhabited it, that is a different generation. This is a generation of today. This is the now generation that we are all part of. See, we have to remember that when they ask those kids, 87% of them said that see if that'll work now.

I might need a clicker back there. 87% of those students believe that their generation has the ability to make a meaningful impact on the world. They want to take up the fight. They want to make a difference, and they believe that they can. So how do we help them? How do we empower them? First, we have to remember the devil he's not sitting back. He has strategy. He has purpose. He is saying, how do we get them?

How are we going to engage the kids? He has a strategy. He wants to do that. Well, I want you to think back. Think back a little bit. What brought you to your faith? Why are you sitting here today? And if that's the case, if you call yourself a believer, what brought you to that? I think about how I was brought up in church. The idea of missing church was a completely foreign idea to me. That would be like, mom, can I skip school every Monday?

I wouldn't have asked that question. It's absurd. I wouldn't have missed church. And then I could give you a list of the names of the people that poured into me and children's ministry and in youth ministry and the woman who taught me the books of the Bible, and the woman I can still hear Michelle Colby's voice. Philippians Philippians, four 13. You know, that is part of my faith journey. What brought me to that? Did I hear my parents praying over me? Oh, yes.

And my mom's here now, so I'm gonna cry. But do I have memories of saying, Levi's suit will grow up to be a mighty man of God? And he will serve God every day of his life. Very distinct memory of hearing that. Our kids need to hear that. They need to be I wish they had none of the our kids ever heard. Oh, he's such a brat. Oh, he is such a trouble. I have so much trouble with that. Stop it.

'cause then it's my job to heal them and to help them work through their daddy issues. Whoo, get me started. Think about what brought you to your faith. There's a book called sticky faith. I didn't even get to this in the last service.

And they did a study of young adults that were raised in church and they said, well, let's find out what made it work for them, that they left the church serving God. And here's what they found. Among other things, that they had a long list of people that had committed to discipling them, a long list of adults that had spoken into their life. And when they were in church, they were giving significant things to do in the church.

While they were kids, while their routines, the key is to not just minister to them, but it's to minister through them. They are our generation. Here we are. We do that through discipleship. So what is discipleship look like? Well, if we were to try to put it into some categories, some strategy. One of the things we start with is Bible engagement. You can't be a Christian and not read the Bible. There I said it.

You need to be reading the Bible for yourself, for your faith to grow. You need your children to know what your Bible looks like. Oh yeah, that's my dad's Bible. He has that out all the time. Have you ever been interrupted by your kids? Have they ever interrupted you watching a show or mowing the grass of the kids ever interrupted you trying to take a nap if the kids ever interrupted you playing video games? If the kids ever interrupted you reading the Bible, they need to see us doing that. They need to hear us reading the Bible out loud to them.

In second Timothy, he said, you have been taught the holy scriptures from childhood. What has that done for them? They have given you the wisdom to receive the Salvation. If we don't receive Salvation without the word. The Salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus, all scriptures inspired by God. And it's useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives.

It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. In other words, we need the Bible or we don't know what's right and we don't know what's wrong. If I didn't read it from the Bible, I should doubt whether it's right or wrong. I need the Bible to know the truth. Proverbs 22 6, direct your children onto the right path. That means they're not going to be on the path yet.

You have to direct them to it. And when they are older, they will not leave it. Read the Bible with their children. Let them catch you reading the Bible on your own. The next thing you build off of, Bible literacy,

Bible engagement, is we have relational, accountability. We as adults, we need relationships. We need accountability. We model that to them, being in a life group.

There's a little plug for you, but that is a great way to that's an easy way to do it. You're going to have that relational accountability. You're going to have built in times when, okay, I have to follow through. I have to show up. I have to be there for people. I have to listen, and I need to help support them. So bring your kids to church, model that, relational accountability is found in this building. That's what this, we use this building, but it's not really the church until we come and we use it.

We bring our kids to church. We send them to base camp. We send them the youth group. And in order to and to what end is in Hebrews ten, let us consider as in strategize and think about and have a goal. Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and toward good deeds.

Not giving up meeting together as summer in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another and all the more as we see the day approaching. Not giving up meeting together. Have you ever said to yourself, oh, I was going to sign up for that softball baseball soccer team, but they had practices on Sunday. Bummer. Yes, we can't do that. Or do we end up saying, oh, Levi, guess what?

You're not going to see junior for about four months because of football practice. Not giving up meeting together. Have you ever heard somebody say this? Well, I don't want my kids to feel like I forced him to go to church. Because there are some adults who will say, my parents forced me to go to church. I'm not going to say this is always the case. But if forcing them to go to church, what that really meant was, they didn't see you wanted to be there.

They didn't see you coming consistently and passionately, but they certainly heard you say oh, you better be in church, kids. They want to be like us. I've heard it even said, our kids will become just like us, despite our best efforts. You heard that before? We need to consider what it will take to spur one another on. We need to model to our kids how to be the church.

Even Monday through Saturday. Because when we do that, we share each other's burdens, and in this way, obey the law of Christ. If you think you were too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself, you are not that important. How do we help each other out? How do we serve each other? We do that through intentional service.

This is what the kingdom. This is where the kingdom of God is in action, and we can see it as when we're serving each other. We've heard that if you want to be great in God's kingdom, you learn to be a servant of all. And Matthew 20, this is how this is how Jesus says that not so with you, instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant. And whoever wants to be the first must be your slave, just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Serving as when our faith really comes alive. And in that book that I already referenced, sticky faith, the kids that served and had significant purpose. They're the ones that stayed in their faith and in their church. Let's give them something significant to do. That's model that servanthood to them. This is the best way to open up the doors for conversation. So you can earn the right to speak into their life.

So we give ourselves in service to our families, and we find that pretty easy to do. And maybe if we really expand our horizons, we'll serve our neighbors. We might help the neighbor lady with her driveway or mowing her grass. Expand our horizons more. It's time to come in and serve in the church. Nobody put me up to this. I think this is just biblical living here. Go and sign up. Show your kids what it means to serve in the church. Go sign up to help in the kids ministry.

Go sign up to help with the youth. You might find that you actually like other people's kids. It could be. It could be. Did you know in the last 90 days, if we're just looking at the last 90 days, we had a 106 students

in grades 6 through 12. Check into at least one event. And if you look at the last 12 months, that's a 160 students. Ingest in grade 6 through 12. Now, that's an awesome one. God is doing.

And that was in the middle of big transitions and all kinds of stuff. But guess what? We are, I've never met another church. I've never seen another church that has two youth pastors. But even with that, we have two people on staff that are trying to disciple at least in the last 90 days, a 106 students see how that math isn't adding up. If you were to ask, so I asked Harry and Jessica, let's just go with the national average.

You know, an average they've decided the new average for a regular church attender, a regular church attender, you're committed, you're considered regular if you come twice a month. That's what they consider a regular church member now. And so I said, how many kids do you have that come at least twice a month? And a fair few kids, babies through 5th grade. That's a 175 kids. Do you see how there's 300 different there's churches that wish they would have 300 people in their building in a year?

And we've had more than 300 kids under 18. And four people on staff. It's never meant to be about the four people on staff. That's the key. If you ask the ladies running Fairview kids, is it running great? Are you doing everything you wish you feel you're reaching your goals or you have an Jessica and Carrie said, you know what? Actually, we would love to break the age groups down more. We have to actually clump them together in bigger groups because we just don't have enough adults.

We don't have enough people serving in Fairview kids. To disciple them the way we really want to ask Josh and me, I'm going to speak for Josh for a minute. We want to further break down the age groups. This Wednesday we're having our kick-off, and we're going to have, I don't know how many kids and there will be two men for all the middle school boys and Josh for all the high school boys. That's not discipleship. That's crowd control. I mean, I mean, that's just really what that is.

And we love it, and good things can happen in that. But that's not the goal. That's not what we're reaching for. If you missed the announcements a little bit, we mentioned that we're going to have a table set up in there telling you all about trail life USA. It's real life USA is Christ centered and boy focused and works to connect men in the church to helping raising godly men through adventure, character, and leadership.

We are having, I know of at least 20 new boys that are said like, oh, when it comes, let us know when is that we're not, we're not even close to having enough men to run that. And I'll have to tell that when we have that when we have our first open house, we're ready to go, but we're going to need some men to hop on board. And that's the same on Wednesday night with Josh and me and Joey. Thank you, Joey. And the thing is.

We need to continue to invest in these children. We need to continue to speak life. We need to continue to say positive things. Listen to this. If you are one of those people that says things like, oh, these kids these days, I'm going to challenge you to say, please speak in complete sentences. That isn't a complete sentence. These kids these days, that's just no. Here's the complete. Are you ready for a complete sentence?

Okay, you might not like this. Because of the world that my generation has created, the values we have withheld, the low expectations, and the sense of defeat that we've lived under these kids these days, okay, now you're allowed to say that sentence. That makes sense to me. Romans ten, it says, but how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him?

And how can they believe in him if they have never heard of him? And how can they hear about him? Unless someone tells them. Because the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to

do nothing. But we know that there are good people doing something, we are seeing the fruit. I mean, think about those kids that I just told you. Think about the lives that are changed.

We are seeing kids turn their feet toward Jesus and commit to lifelong relationship with Jesus. We're seeing kids being baptized. Let's watch this. Let's watch this video. Hi, my name is Ella, and I have made the choice to follow Jesus today because he has changed my life drastically that impacts almost my whole life. I was a bit selfish, to be honest.

And now I really want to care about for everyone. And I want to help everyone and I hope I can spread the good news. Jesus in my life has changed everything. I learned in Sunday school and church and that Jesus died on the cross for my sins. I told mom I couldn't remember where I asked him to my heart. Jesus helped me in one to act better. Praying helped me feel closer to God.

I'm pretty where mom and dad met plants and animals. My family and friends too. I decided to get baptized because I want you to go to heaven, but I can't go to heaven without Jesus. I like to think mistress of baptizing me. And my parents were helping. My name is Juliana and Emily and Becker.

And Jesus has changed everything. Ta-da.