

INTERGENERATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE CHURCH: PARENTAL BENEFITS
OF LEARNING ALONGSIDE CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

The majority of Christian churches structure their Christian education opportunities by dividing groups according to age—Sunday School consists of different classrooms according to grade while a different Bible class is offered for adults. In an age where religious education at home is a rarity and the family as the foundation of society is falling apart, it is practically and theologically imperative for the church to address these concerns. This thesis explores the learning benefits intergenerational education provides to parents as an argument for its congregational use. Through secular studies, historical themes, and Scriptural support, intergenerational education shows itself to be a necessary consideration within a church's Christian education program as it serves the Christian parent.

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INTRODUCTION

“Won’t you be my neighbor?” Generations of parents and children recognize and can sing those famous closing words from the opening song of the iconic children’s television show *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*. Even now after Rogers’ death and the show’s discontinuation, younger generations will still likely recognize those words, but from the animated spin-off series *Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood*. The correctness of Rogers’ theology¹ and his shaping of millennials both positively and negatively can be debated, but there is little debate over the fact that Rogers has had an influence on a large portion of the current United States’ population. Every weekday for more than thirty years, this gentle, older man entered homes and shared a little less than thirty minutes with young children and their parents. Even though he appeared on a screen, he sang songs with children, told stories, and taught them lessons in life. Rogers never got to know the many children he virtually interacted with, but the children got to know him. He became their neighbor. A different question Rogers asked speaks even more pointedly to the issue of intergenerational education. “How can older and younger people respond to each other if they have no experiences together?”²

Countless variables affect the interactions and relationships between individuals, and this is no less true in the church. Personality compatibility attracts people to each other. Common interests are conducive to conversations. Socio-economic similarities offer comparable experiences with which to identify. Age and gender present similar perspectives on life. Distance prevents many fellow believers from ever even meeting on this earth. The list could go on and on. It would be naïve to suggest the impossible task of eliminating all differences in order to create a better unity of believers and even more naïve to think that eliminating differences necessarily creates a stronger unity. Scripture speaks of the church as the body of believers united in Christ, but made up of many differences each with their purpose³. On the other hand, in the unity of faith, the church strives to overcome obstacles of physical and social differences to bring people together in Christ. In the mainstream practice of the Lutheran church, one such

¹ Fred Rogers was trained Presbyterian minister.

² James W. White, *Intergenerational Religious Education: Models, Theory, and Prescription for Interage Life and Learning in the Faith Community* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press., 1988), 27. White cites this quote from “An Interview with Fred Rogers,” *Generations Together Exchange*, 1:2 (November, 1986), p. 3.

³ Cf. 1 Co 12:12-31.

difference is not only evident, but also actively encouraged. For organized religious education, churches frequently separate according to age. Children are sent to Sunday School, while adults gather together for their own study. Within Sunday School, children are typically further divided on the basis of grade, depending upon the quantity of children and available teachers within the congregation.

Brain development and pedagogical techniques serve as undeniable evidence to separate according to age in the realm of education. This thesis does not attempt question or challenge the legitimacy of a distinction between pedagogy and andragogy. Rather, this thesis' purpose is to address what benefits exist in an intergenerational Christian education setting, particularly between adults and children, in order to make a case for including children with adults during education opportunities in the life of a Christian congregation.

Part of understanding the blessings intergenerational education can offer is recognizing the challenges an age segregated education system carries in the church. Under the current status quo of separating children from adults during the study of God's Word, legitimate questions arise concerning the relationships between generations in a congregation. Division by age presents an artificial transition and assimilation process, as people grow older and graduate to different groups that would not be otherwise present. Perspectives from people in other stations of life are sent to other classrooms. People whether old or young generally gravitate to people within their age bracket and have more difficulty communicating—at least meaningful communication—with people the greater the age gap. It is difficult to expect or foster spiritual conversations to take place among members who do not have a relationship built upon the Word together. An educational division according to age does not directly encourage building relationships across generations in the Word, the place where spiritual conversations would naturally take place.

This issue of spiritual conversation perhaps is most relevant within the relationships in the home. The church's role is to support the parents as they bring up their children in the Lord. The question is whether exclusive age segregation in Christian education accomplishes that in the best way it can or whether incorporating children with adults in Bible study would assist parents in their role as primary spiritual caregivers for their children. Divided education is not the only factor, but one must at least consider whether such educational practices further the

generation gap whereas incorporating intergenerational education might begin to bridge the generations together.

The issues surrounding intergenerational education impact every congregation. No congregation is made up solely of one age bracket, and congregational dynamics constantly change as their age demographics fluctuate through new members, transfers, deaths, births, and simply the aging of the members that remain. As the church serves all the members of the body of believers, it cannot overlook the obstacle of generation gaps in relationships among members. To tackle every aspect and angle of intergenerational education is a task far beyond the scope of this thesis. This thesis rather argues from the perspective of a parent within such a setting.

Thesis Statement

The spiritual nurturing and equipping provided to parents through intergenerational education necessitate its inclusion within a Christian congregation's educational considerations.

Outline

To prove this thesis statement, a review of literature pertaining to key concepts relevant to this study will be discussed. Secondly, the methodological approach for the study will be laid out. Thirdly, the findings from modern educational research, historical precedents, and biblical basis and encouragement will be reported. The thesis will close with conclusions drawn, implications from those conclusions and suggestions for further research on this topic.

This thesis discusses an adult parent as a learner in a Christian intergenerational educational setting. Those boundaries have already been established within this introduction, but it necessary to further qualify and confine the specific scope of key terms.

Definitions

The term “adult” has a number of different definitions depending upon its context. With the education emphasis of this thesis, a division at the customary age of graduation from high school seems appropriate. To make a more concrete distinction, this thesis views an adult as any person age 18 and older. The government recognizes individuals 18 or older as responsible for themselves and their own decisions without the need of a legal guardian. Perhaps more relevant to making 18 the cutoff age is that after high school, people are no longer socially viewed as teenagers. Evidence for this can be seen in the church specifically in the realm of Christian education, as special teen classes exist as the last stepping-stone to the adult class. Individuals are transitioned to the adult class after high school graduation, if not earlier.

Just as the term “adult” is open to varying understandings, so also the term “parent” covers a broad spectrum. Parent, as used in this thesis, does not denote any person who has produced offspring. That would include a gamut of age demographics as the majority of people have children. For the sake of this study of parents in intergenerational Christian education, a parent is defined as a person who provides for the well-being of his or her children and whose children accompany him or her to the Christian education opportunity. Practically speaking, in most cases, a parent refers to someone who has children under the age of 18 that they bring along with them to Bible study.

In its broadest sense, intergenerational education refers to any sort of learning that takes place in a setting where people from different generations are present. People learn constantly from the world around them, so one could show endless places where such intergenerational education exists, including work, home, the grocery store and even the gym. Perhaps there is even an argument that intergenerational education according to its broad sense is the most common form of education because even within the typical school classroom the teacher, who is from a different generation than the students, still learns while teaching. Within congregational life, such intergenerational educational opportunities become abundantly apparent as well. People of all ages worship together. During fellowship gatherings, people of different generations mingle, learning about the lives of each other. Even a customary adult Bible class would be considered an intergenerational educational setting as the adults in the class span multiple generations.

For the sake of this study, intergenerational education will have a much narrower meaning. As noted above with the limiting definition of an adult parent, the intergenerational component focused upon will be of that generation and the generation of their children. However, the intergenerational gathering for instruction is not and should not be confined to only such families in attendance. The intergenerational education setting includes members of all generations. In addition, the intergenerational education explored and discussed will be limited to a formal education setting, where learning is the primary purpose of the gathering for all participants, not just a secondary result. Within the life of the Christian congregation, the context of Bible class most naturally fits this definition of intentional intergenerational education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous books, journals, and articles have been dedicated to exploring, understanding, and implementing Christian education. The field does not become much smaller when the subject is narrowed to adult Christian education. Various paths have been pursued in adult education differentiating the adult learner from the child. These have produced substantial findings in adults' workings of the mind, the motivation of the heart⁴, and desire for specific application when they learn. Such findings have morphed teaching methodology to cater to adults' needs and wishes.

Intergenerational education adds a new wrinkle to these developments of educational science. Instead of seeing the adult as an individual, it views the learner according to his typical daily context, one that consists of frequent interaction with people of different ages and one that changes gradually over time. Advocating this method of instruction does not neglect the learning developments that come with age, but rather views life with less rigid stages than society has placed. "A theory of learning that sees continuity between childhood and adulthood would seek ways to develop more intergenerational forms of learning."⁵

As the church evaluates adult Christian education, the research behind adult learning contributes to practices. At the same time, the church must balance its methods of instructing God's Word with theological, theoretical, and practical restraint according to the reality of the situation before it. In the conversation to incorporate intergenerational education into congregational practice, four major themes emerge.

Christian education begins in the home, so the home should be retained in Christian education. With the changing culture in the home and society as a whole, intergenerational education is more important now than ever. This is especially true for adults since religious education does not reach a completion point but is a life-long process. As adults engage in learning and growing in faith their whole lives, it takes place not just during the entire timeframe of life, but within the entire framework of life. Life is intergenerational, and learning happens in life.

⁴ Cf. Zarling's "Increasing the Motivational Level of Adult Bible Hour Participation Through Teaching Style" for a thought-provoking treatment of the connection between an adult's attitude toward Bible study and the dialogical teaching method.

⁵ John L. Elias, *The Foundations and Practice of Adult Religious Education*. (Malabar, FL: R.E. Krieger Pub., 1982), 118.

Religious Instruction Begins at Home

A dominant argument in favor of intergenerational education is the prominence of the home as the center of religion. Parents pass the Word of God down to their children. “The place of the family as society’s most common intergenerational entity cannot be sidestepped in this discussion. For some, the major motivating factor behind the development of IGCE [Intergenerational Christian Education] was the breakdown of the family unit, not least in churches, and so it is not surprising that IGCE models have focused on family units.”⁶

God gave parents the primary responsibility of spiritual care for their children. The church supports parents in that role, but does not replace or supersede them. “Parents dare never assume that a Sunday morning Bible class is providing for the full needs of their children... parents are still responsible for the spiritual growth of their children; and their responsibility include directing the lives of their children through regular study of God’s Word in the homes.”⁷

Intergenerational education visibly recognizes the relationship between the church and home, equipping parents in their nurturing of children while encouraging parents to take the lead role. Krueger warned against a shift of responsibility from parents to others, primarily public education, but the same warning applies within the church. “We Christians need to be reminded of our parental responsibility from time to time, for in the last few decades there has been a gradual shifting of those responsibilities from parents to other people...[the solution] is, rather, re-education parents concerning the need for them to assume their responsibilities.”⁸

Intergenerational education attempts to balance the parents and church’s roles.

Besides fulfilling the God-given instruction to instruct their children, parents themselves benefit from taking the lead in teaching their children. Pointing to the psychologist Erik Erikson, White emphasizes the trust built between parents and children develop during social interaction.⁹ Right in line, Stonehouse argues that the relationship formed with their children is the primary

⁶ Allan G. Harkness, “Intergenerational Education For An Intergenerational Church?” *Religious Education* 93, no. 4 (1998): 435.

⁷ Silas R. Krueger, “Teach Them Diligently: Essays in Consideration of the Church’s Responsibilities in Christian Education” (Paper presented, *Forty-Second Biennial Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, New Ulm, MN, August 1973*), 29.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁹ White, 94-97.

factor for their parenting ease and success.¹⁰ The benefits for parents are not limited to relational growth, but parents themselves deepen their knowledge by teaching their children. “Telling or reading Bible stories to children is still one of the best ways for adults to learn the stories for themselves.”¹¹

Culture Change

While religious instruction—and all education—begins in the home, the culture of society has moved away from keeping it there. The customary age for formal schooling continues to dip younger and younger with preschool. On the other side, continued education beyond high school has become the norm, and many careers require even further graduate work. While the age demographics of those in graduate work often vary, the structure of schools up until that level of higher education are organized according to completion of the previous level, which typically results in age divisions. Flowing right out of the education system, extracurricular activities naturally follow similar age divisions, permeating age classification outside the classroom.

A change has not just developed in the area of the education system, but at the very foundations of a child’s education: the home. Home and work were not always two different places. Family businesses were much more prevalent. Children assisted their parents in supporting the family, and because of that, parents simply spent more time with their children with more opportunities for interaction and instruction. With the decrease of time together in the home, society’s shift of the workplace outside of the home presents an obstacle to internal family relationships that was not typical generations ago.¹² Complicated with that is the change among the parental structure within the home. High divorce rates have created many single-parent homes.¹³ With remarriages, some children find themselves with four people functioning as their parents. The homosexual movement’s push upon marriage in the United States today adds another wrinkle to the destruction of the family unit. A home with one father and one mother can no longer be expected as typical. Such a drastic alteration within the home cannot be dismissed

¹⁰ Catherine Stonehouse, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 38.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹² White, 4-6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3.

because of the effects it has upon education in general, but more particularly spiritual relationships and instruction.

Applying the work of anthropologist Margaret Mead, White identifies significant intergenerational ramifications from a culture change not just in education or the home, but over society as a whole. Instead of the younger generation learning from and building off the older generation's knowledge and instruction, the world has changed almost upside down. Not only does each generation have to learn and discover for themselves, but in some cases the younger generations must teach the older generations.¹⁴ White points to this phenomenon in the realm of technology.¹⁵ Such an inversion of teaching roles does not universally exist, and there are several examples that could be listed demonstrating a younger generation needing the insight and experience of an older generation. Nonetheless, it does demonstrate that the relationship between older and younger generations in teaching and learning is not a stagnant top-to-bottom paradigm, but fluctuating. With a change in the education model comes a change in the personal interactions and relationships formed between different generations. White suggests that each generation's unique experience has widened the gap between them. "For all the parties present there is no common current vocabulary by which to dialogue."¹⁶

Life-long Religious Learner

Learning does not end with a diploma or degree. It does not end by reaching certain stage of development either. From the theories of Piaget's cognitive development process to Kohlberg's stages of moral development to Fowler's phases of faith development, none of them stops in adolescence, but each continues into adulthood.¹⁷

That truth is all the more important in spiritual growth. Recognizing that all people in are in a continual process of learning, the teacher becomes a student and the student becomes a teacher. "The traditional school model of Christian education and nurture, which continues to

¹⁴ Ibid., 100. As quoted by White from Mead's *Culture and Commitment: The New Relationship Between the Generations in the 1970s*, Mead describes the pattern of generational learning as "*postfigurative*, when the future repeats the past, *cofigurative*, in which the present is the guide to future expectations and *prefigurative* for the kind of culture in which the elders have to learn from the children." Mead made this observation almost forty years ago, and with the speed at which the world has been changing since then, especially with the technology industry, her distinctions have grown more visibly profound.

¹⁵ Ibid., 102.

¹⁶ Ibid., 101.

¹⁷ Ibid., 106-120.

maintain the roles of adult-as-teacher and child-as-learner, needs to be reexamined and a greater codependence encouraged which allows for mutual teaching and learning.”¹⁸ While a pastor serves as the spiritual leader, he is not the only person who teaches God’s people, or perhaps even the one with most impact. “Participation in Christian community is important for personal spiritual formation, for the transformation brought about by the Holy Spirit is not completed in a social vacuum.”¹⁹ The body of believers teach each other through their interactions, whether young or old. “God blesses adults and enhances our formation through the little ones with whom we walk.”²⁰

While commenting solely on adult learning, Vella wrote, “Teamwork is a principle of adult learning as well as an effective practice.”²¹ Christ’s team does not consist of only one generation of learners. The church must embrace, incorporate, and encourage people to look to learn from believers of different generations. Intergenerational education removes a narrow understanding of who teaches and learns, while promoting the corporate interests of ongoing learning.

Life-long learning consists of more than just learning for the whole period of life, but learning that touches every aspect of life. Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives began the movement to consider the whole person in learning.²² The whole person has deep connections to those of other generations, particularly between parents and children. The quality and impact of learning corresponds to the connection it has to a person’s life. “Our deepest learning experiences are those which we have shared with our children and parents and with friends, both older and younger.”²³ Intergenerational education encourages a person to learn his whole life and embrace his whole person learning by having the people of his life learn with him.

An Intergenerational Life

People do not live in generationally segregated societies. People do not work only with coworkers born from the same decade. Learning in an age-divided Bible class that has any

¹⁸ Harkness , 439.

¹⁹ Ibid., 436.

²⁰ Stonehouse, 213.

²¹ Jane Kathryn Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), 149.

²² White, 142.

²³ Elias, 177.

practical application immediately encounters an obstacle for implementation in an intergenerational world. Intergenerational education presents life as it is, a mixture of ages, while confronting issues or pondering how to proceed. The interactions that might take place outside of an adult Bible class have the potential to at least be better simulated within intergenerational education or even accomplished. Whatever a person does learn also possesses intergenerational ramifications. “If an individual learns something or changes in some way, it affects all others in the family or group.”²⁴

The primary activity of congregational life is intergenerational. All God’s people, young and old gather together in God’s house for worship. “From its Old Testament Jewish roots, the early Christians church maintained its intergenerational entity with persons of all ages considered to be integral parts of it.”²⁵ Intergenerational education builds off the unity and fellowship of believers already present, giving an opportunity for specific intergenerational interaction and relationship building that sitting in a pew often does not allow.

The tightest intergenerational relationships exist in the home, where life occurs most naturally and family members share the most experiences. Education that separates students by age limits intergenerational interaction, but Harkness warns that the same effect can come about with an over-emphasis on the family unit.

Educators in Christian faith communities need to be aware of a danger: IGCE models which focus on family units rather than commencing with the congregational unit often fail to take sufficient cognizance of the reality of many contemporary congregations which comprise a wide range of people for whom a “family” model for church may be unhelpful.²⁶

The Christian life is connected to people of different generations in the world, in the body of believers, and in the family. Intergenerational education needs to bring all generations together because life includes all generations.

²⁴ White, 127.

²⁵ Harkness, 436.

²⁶ Ibid., 435.

METHODOLOGY

Multiple case studies of parents in intergenerational Christian education settings would be the ideal evidence for this thesis. The difficulty with this comes from a lack of case studies of intergenerational education in the church. This lack of case studies is likely indicative of a low presence of Bible classes being taught with an intergenerational structure.

An original case study could have been developed, identifying churches making use of intergenerational education or similar programs and surveying adult participants to evaluate their experiences in order to identify learning benefits. However, a vast amount of uncontrollable variables would greatly limit what that sampling of intergenerational education could deduce. For a lack of ability to confine the parameters of intergenerational education in a church case study, such a direction would be ill-advised to produce authoritative findings.

With the event of limited intergenerational education practice in the church, and even more limited experimental studies of intergenerational religious education, this thesis rather pursues case studies of intergenerational education outside of the church. With reliance on the findings from these studies concerning adult learning in such a setting, this thesis presents benefits that intergenerational education in the church could provide to parents. Besides current case studies, an examination of the historical usage of intergenerational patterns in education is most fitting to view its acceptance and success in society. Finally, a comparison of intergenerational education and its benefits to the principles of Scripture is necessary not only because the consideration of intergenerational education applies directly to Christian education, but because God's Word governs the entire life of the Christian.

Approach to Case Studies

In the realm of case studies pertaining to intergenerational education, two dominant themes are immediately noticed: the joint education of children and the elderly and the intergenerational education in connection with the environment. In order to serve the purpose of this thesis, intergenerational education case studies that consisted of children and elderly were not examined, as they do not pertain directly to the adult parent learner according to this thesis' definitions. The topic of the environment for intergenerational education case studies poses no unique hindrance or help for adult learning, so these case studies were included and even preferred in selection due to their high frequency, which allowed for a specificity of approach to intergenerational education.

One other critical qualifier was used in sifting and analyzing intergenerational education case studies. Each case study needed to place an emphasis on adult learning. Many intergenerational case studies seek to learn more about a child in these learning atmospheres, but in order to address the thesis, only case studies that examined what the adult gained through intergenerational education became relevant. In addition, the adult needed to be the parent of the child, as family relationships create different dynamics. Some of the case studies shown look at the child, even making conclusions about the child, but all have a direct connection to the parent learning through intergenerational education.

Approach to History

A thorough study of the history of intergenerational education would likely offer many insights on the topic as a whole. However, since this thesis pertains to Christian education, the history of education in the Christian church was investigated. The timeframe for this exploration spanned from present back to the nation of Israel during Old Testament times. Not only were directly recognizable instances of intergenerational education surveyed, but also occurrences of themes supported and promoted by intergenerational education.

Approach to Scripture

In this thesis, the words of Scripture are viewed as the inspired, inerrant Word of God. Thus, they possess an authority that surpasses every authority of man, including science. These words are spiritual and historical truth. When interpreting Scripture, basic principles of interpretation are upheld. Words are read according to their grammatical, historical context with the goal of understanding what the author, God, wants to communicate. Any apparent contradiction to reason, science, or anything else does not override these interpretation principles, nor do they negate the truth of Scripture. God's Word is his revelation to people, which governs and guides every aspect of life.

The Word of God is the ultimate authority and Scripture testifies in this Word that he alone changes hearts and lives with the gospel.²⁷ A point of clarification must be made then concerning the study and use of modes and methods for Christian education. Firstly, the Word of God does not properly refer to the recitation or reading of words and sentences as found on the pages of a book called the Bible. The Word of God strictly speaking is the message God has communicated. The teacher of God's Word is thus free to explain, paraphrase, summarize, and

²⁷ Cf. Ro 1:17.

the like while still giving people God's Word.²⁸ Secondly, God has decided to relay his message through the medium of words. He has bound himself according to the usage of language and how those words communicate to people. This necessitates the church to be concerned about teaching methodology and validates the importance of a thesis evaluating the capabilities of intergenerational education in proclaiming God's message. Hein summarizes the relationship so succinctly. "It is entirely impossible for a mere man to limit the power of God. Therefore, it is equally impossible for a mere man to limit the power of God's Word. However, to the degree that we communicate poorly, we can prevent the Word from being received."²⁹ God is always the one at work through his Word, but he uses people to communicate his Word in ways that people understand words. Evaluating teaching techniques and designs—in the case of this thesis, intergenerational education—is the church's effort to fulfill its God-given role to his glory in the best way it can, by instructing in a way that communicates most clearly.

²⁸ Lutheran dogmaticians speak of this as a distinction between *materia* and *forma*. Cf. Hoenecke's *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics* vol. IV, p. 5-7.

²⁹ Jon Hein, "Treasures in Jars of Clay - The Synergy Between the Instrumental and Ministerial Causes in God's Plan of Salvation" (Paper presented, 2012 Arizona-California District Pastor's Conference, Phoenix, AZ, October 2012), 15. Lutheran dogmaticians have historically adopted Aristotle's four causes to distinguish different relationships in theology, and in particular salvation. On page 3 of his paper, Hein quotes Quenstedt giving a clear definition for each cause of salvation and emphasizing their relationship to each other. "At the heart of our salvation is the Trinity. He is the principal cause. Everything originates with him. Obviously, if there were no God, there would be no grace, no Savior, no Word, Sacraments, ministers, and so on and so forth.

The impulsive causes of salvation are those things which moved God to act for our benefit. There are inner impulsive causes: the tender heart and fatherly love of God. There are also outward impulsive causes: both the misery of mankind and the merits of Christ.

The instrumental cause of salvation is the Word and Sacrament. These are the tools by which God creates faith and gathers the Church.

The ministerial cause of salvation is the ministers God calls. They become God's agents, playing a vital role in his saving work, by utilizing the Word, i.e. the instrumental cause."

FINDINGS

Case Studies

The study of human thoughts, emotions, and behaviors develops many theories, but no laws of science. The complexity of people makes variables impossible to remove. Even with these uncontrollable factors, general conclusions can be deduced by observing a group of people in a specific circumstance. A case study is “an intensive study of single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units.”³⁰ The following case studies do not attempt to demonstrate a causative relationship between parental learning and intergenerational settings. Rather, without overlooking the studies’ limitations, they express observations supporting beneficial implications for intergenerational education.

Land transfer case study

Intergenerational studies have concluded increased and necessary communication between parents and children. Identifying an issue of land transfer in Minnesota, the University of Minnesota conducted an Intergenerational Land Transfer Class between 2007 and 2010 to encourage and assist families to make plans for the future of their land by providing the platform for discussion and necessary tools. Post-class surveys collected information regarding the participants’ class experience. “Family communication was mentioned by most participants as the most important learning outcome from the class.”³¹ Such discussions could have taken place among the family within the home, but the intergenerational class structure created a context for conversation with the focus of working together. On the basis of the participants’ responses and successful development of land transfer plans, the study concluded the following.

The results obtained in the Land Transfer program would not have occurred without an interdisciplinary approach and attention to multi-generational issues....Rather than only being focused on transferring land or passing a management ethic on to the next generation, session time was designed to engage family members, providing an opportunity for them to share individual perspectives...Intergenerational programming brings people together to learn from one another and explore possibilities.³²

This study does not correlate perfectly with this thesis’ situation of parents learning with their children, as both the parents and children in this study would be classified as adults. As a

³⁰ John Gerring, “What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?” *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 02 (2004): 342.

³¹ Michael Reichenbach, Becky Hagen Jokela, and Eli Sagor. “Family Communication and Multigeneration Learning in an Intergenerational Land Transfer Class.” *Journal of Extension* 5, no. 4 (2013): 5.

³² *Ibid*, 6,7.

result, different variables affect conversations and learning between two groups of adults. Nevertheless, the general observations of these findings cannot be overlooked. Conversation blossomed between generations in this intergenerational program. Members of each generation were given the opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions openly. Perhaps of greatest significance for this thesis is the identification of the parents learning from their children through the conversations prompted by the intergenerational program. One participant responded on the survey, “The most important thing I learned is to first determine how each family member perceives the land, and to find out their future ‘vision’ for the land.”³³ Understanding the perspectives of individuals from another generation clearly grew through this intergenerational program.

One final observation to note from this study is the continued activity of the families to use the tools they learned in class outside of class. What they learned affected their immediate lives both individually and as a family. “Some participants contacted an attorney, forester, or CPA for the specific purpose of making a plan to pass the property to the next generation....Thirty-two out of 62 respondents reported using the Heirloom Scale at home with their families.”³⁴ The benefits for the participants of the intergenerational program extended beyond the program itself.

Birds of prey case study

An intergenerational study from the perspective of environmental education offers conclusions more consistent and relevant to intergenerational education within the church. The environmental study focused on the family, consisting primarily of parent-child groupings in which the children ranged from elementary school to middle school.³⁵ After being shown a presentation on birds of prey, the families were given the task to create a drawing of one of the birds together. From the interactions of the family while drawing, the case study made observations and drew conclusions.

This case study was cautious to limit its findings to be consistent only to similar public outdoor learning environments, noting that family learning does not necessarily respond in the

³³ Ibid, 5.

³⁴ Ibid, 5.

³⁵ Heather Toomey Zimmerman and Lucy Richardson McClain. “Intergenerational Learning at a Nature Center: Families Using Prior Experiences and Participation Frameworks to Understand Raptors” *Environmental Education Research* 20, no. 2 (2013): 182.

same way in the home or other educational settings as it does in a public education environment.³⁶ However, the variances accounted for by educational climate do not toss out the conclusions for intergenerational education found in this study. The results may not take the same form or reach the full potential within a congregational Bible class, but they do show positive effects that can and do come from intergenerational education.

After examining the interactions of the families as they complete their drawing project, the study identified three key observations from the intergenerational education: “Parents managing disagreements. Families negotiating ideas. Collaborative idea formation by parents and children together.”³⁷ Parents actively engage in resolving conflicts, taking the leadership role. At the same time, through this intergenerational exercise, both parents and children contribute thoughts and input, validating the child’s offerings to the task and producing a unity among parents and children with the work.

One other significant conclusion from this study has implications for intergenerational education within the life of the church. “In the nature center, when discussing BoP [Birds of Prey], families referred to prior knowledge, prior shared family experiences, and the recent information from the BoP show.”³⁸ The learning discussion that took place between parents and children incorporated both the immediate instruction given at the presentation, but also the lives of the participants before the presentation. This may seem like a trivial point, stating the obvious. People carry their knowledge and experiences with them into the classroom. However, the crucial significance is that this study reveals intergenerational educational creating a platform for discussion among families of such past events. Families are placed within a context that encourages them to recount practical connections and applications. What they experience through intergenerational education then becomes another shared event in the past for parents and children to connect with each other in the future.

These connections strengthen the bond within the family, allowing each to learn from another. The study shows an example of that. “Using the recent BoP show experience as a reminder, Bob prompted Michael to remember that he had seen an owl pellet displayed in a pack and to think about what it contained (i.e., rodent bones)....This shared experience from the BoP

³⁶ Ibid, 184.

³⁷ Ibid, 189.

³⁸ Ibid, 185.

show provided the means to start a discussion that owls ate rodents, which subsequently influenced their family's drawing."³⁹ The memory of one participant enables the other family members to grow in their thinking and branches out the discussion to related relevant topics. From this study's intergenerational learning, "the act of reminding one another of activities the family had previously experienced emerged as a social learning tool."⁴⁰ No particular trait of environmental education contributes solely to this phenomenon of social learning through intergenerational education, and there is no evidence to think that similar consequences would not transfer over to intergenerational education within the church on some level.

Child influence case study

The studies presented in these findings up to this point have highlighted primarily the communication development and insights obtained within families through intergenerational education. The second study did note the role that children can take in teaching their parents, but viewed it from the contribution the child offered to the task. Istead and Shapiro approach the parent-child relationship from a different perspective. They evaluate the perceived influence of teaching each other and the whole family through intergenerational education instead of documenting the visible evidence of such learning influence.

Five children between the ages of 10 and 12 participated in a weeklong environmental education program with their mothers. Activities and journaling exercises were used with the student to initiate conversation in this intergenerational education setting. The conversations and journal entries were not the data collected and analyzed, but several months after the education program, interviews were conducted separately with each of the participants for them to reflect upon their intergenerational experience and the influences of their learning.

As with any study, uncontrollable variables affect some of the responses for both the children and the mothers. Despite those variances, the perceived influence of the child in teaching the family became apparent by the responses. "The majority of children and parents in the study report that children do operate as learning catalysts and they influence parent and family knowledge."⁴¹ The degree to which each recognizes the child's influence varies, but more

³⁹ Ibid, 187.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 189.

⁴¹ Laura Istead and Bonnie Shapiro. "Recognizing the Child as Knowledgeable Other: Intergenerational Learning Research to Consider Child-to-Adult Influence on Parent and Family Eco-Knowledge." *Journal of Research in Childhood Education* 28, no. 1 (2013): 125.

often than not, a child perceives this role to be a source of learning, and perhaps more importantly, the parent recognizes and embraces the opportunity to learn from the child.

From the interviews, parent responses reveal the depth of learning that the children impress upon them. What the parents learned from their children did not only shape their knowledge. “[Marcia] shared how her attitude changed and how passionately Matt shared his knowledge: ‘I didn’t care that much but he is always on my neck about it, about the garbage. Sometimes he will go through the garbage and take things out and put it in [the] recycling.’”⁴² Matt’s communication to his mother certainly informed her about recycling, but much more than increasing her knowledge, he changed her view and priority of recycling. Marcia learned not just new facts, but a new outlook from her child.

The influence of a child in teaching the parent does not end in the mind, but exhibits itself in actions. The response from parents in this study confirms that.

Rita described what she called the tremendous influence Rebecca has on the family’s environmental knowledge and behavior:

Well the light usage for sure and turning off the lights and how we should be using alternate forms of energy and you need to use more efficient light bulbs and saying what we do . . . like she [Rebecca] gets dad in trouble for washing his car in the lane. We got to go paint fishes by the water drains so she is all up on what goes down the drain and all that. She is very aware how much water we use to water the grass, “You have to put a Frisbee down and mom and dad only fill the Frisbee.” And putting only perennials that can grow without much water . . . she is certainly aware of all that.⁴³

Parents’ behaviors change and conform to their children and what their children teach them. The impact of a child’s thoughts and considerations affect every area of life for a parent, influencing their actions and teaching them to live differently. One mother, Karen, took note of the positive lesson she learned from her child that brought economic and health benefits for the entire family. “They certainly do influence what we buy . . . especially for groceries I find . . . now they are that the age where she [Kim] is looking at the nutritional value of everything and so she definitely helps influence . . . you know . . . makes us think about what we buy . . . they are definitely more health conscious than we ever were as kids so that definitely influences us.”⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid, 123.

⁴³ Ibid, 124.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 124.

With these responses, the study shows that parents learn from their children and that learning is not confined to any particular field or activity. In addition, the learning is not limited to factual knowledge, but includes attitudinal and behavioral changes. This study's conclusions not only state the value of intergenerational education for the parent, but encourage its further development and implementation an account of what the child is capable of sharing with the family.

Our research findings affirm the existence of child-to-adult learning influence and show the range of perspectives on this influence that exist for parents and children. There are excellent reasons for supporting and enhancing children's positive influence on parents and families. Teachers and parents will benefit from developing greater awareness of the learning potential for children and families through gaining insight into the goals and benefits of intergenerational influence and research. We suggest that there is value in sharing this research with teachers and parents. The findings can be used in the development of curriculum approaches and new teaching strategies designed to explicitly empower children to positively influence the ideas and actions of adults and other family members, as a form of education and influence.⁴⁵

Historical Themes

One cannot appeal to historical precedent for the widespread presence or success of intergenerational education, especially not within the church. Through the development of Christian education, its prevalence is simply not accounted for. However, by looking at the history of adult education in the Christian church, different practices throughout the centuries suggest significant themes that intergenerational education follows.

Family clusters

The most recent and most visibly resembling form of Christian education to intergenerational education is the family cluster model. This structure of teaching would certainly be categorized as intergenerational education when using a slightly broader definition. Margaret Sawin developed the cluster model with the purpose of designing family models for education. In 1970, she implemented her clusters at The First Baptist Church of Rochester, N.Y., which blossomed into participation from fifteen families and the formation of three clusters.⁴⁶ Within her family cluster model, Sawin received positive feedback from participants expressing

⁴⁵ Ibid, 126.

⁴⁶ Margaret Sawin. "An Overall View Of The Family Cluster Experience: Historically, Leadership-Wise, Family-Wise" *Religious Education* 69, no. 2 (1974): 185.

appreciation for the unity of all ages, perspectives gained about each other, and discussion of meaningful life issues.⁴⁷

Family clusters never became a prominent movement among Christian education. Nevertheless, several resources for family clusters have been produced to guide churches in this model. One manual highlights the benefits family clusters offer to its participants of all ages. “The family cluster brings adults and children together. Here adults are reminded of the freshness of a child’s view of the world. Here they discover that children have a theology that needs to be heard and shared. By the same token children need to hear about the growing and learning experiences of the significant adults in their lives.”⁴⁸ In the mid-1900s, organized adult education emerged particularly as an active and promoted development with Christian churches.⁴⁹ Prior to this, most religious instruction for adults took place in the home through literature or in smaller groups as opposed to an open congregational event. Perhaps family clusters never caught fire because the small group Bible study was not a novel concept.

Luther’s educational influence

Luther is known not only as a religious reformer, but credited for lasting influence on educational reform. He was an outspoken proponent of a public school system, of the opinion that all children should attend school regardless of gender. Sending children to school was non-negotiable for Luther.

This one consideration alone would be sufficient to justify the establishment everywhere of the very best schools for both boys and girls, namely, that in order to maintain its temporal estate outwardly the world must have good and capable men and women...Now such men must come from our boys, and such women from our girls. Therefore, it is a matter of properly educating and training our boys and girls to that end.⁵⁰

For a person who encourages children to leave the home and attend school, it would seem unlikely that Luther would support intergenerational education. Yet Luther sought an educational balance. From the abundance of Luther’s educational comments in his writings, Painter identifies

⁴⁷ Ibid, 188.

⁴⁸ Mel Williams and Mary Ann Brittain, *Christian Education in Family Clusters: 38 Sessions for the Church Year* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1982), 11.

⁴⁹ Elias, 136.

⁵⁰ Martin Luther, “To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany that They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools,” in *The Christian in Society II*. (ed. Walther I. Brandt; trans. Albert T. E. Steinhaeuser; vol. 45 of *Luther’s Works*, American Edition, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1962), 368.

eight overarching points that filtrated Luther's thoughts. Three of them have particular significance regarding intergenerational education.

2. He set up as the noble ideal of education *a Christian man*, fitted through instruction and discipline to discharge the duties of every relation of life.
4. With resistless energy he impressed upon parents, ministers, and civil officers their obligation to educate the young.
6. In his appreciation of nature and of child-life, he laid the foundation for education science.⁵¹

Luther saw education not with the sole purpose of imparting knowledge, but to permeate every aspect of life. Education addressed the heart and soul of Christian just as much the mind. He recognized the need to know how humans think and learn in order to teach them. As the examined case studies provide examples of the instruction parents receive while learning alongside their children, Luther would find satisfaction with intergenerational education for this consideration. Finally, with his insistence that the state's education is no substitution for parental instruction, Luther favored efforts that promoted such. Luther deplored the neglect of religious instruction that parents in his day were guilty of committing, as he states in the preface to the Small Catechism.

In particular, at this point also urge governing authorities and parents to rule well and to send their children to school. Point out how they are obliged to do so and what a damnable sin they commit if they do not, for thereby, as the worst enemies of God and humanity, they overthrow and lay waste both the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. Explain very clearly what kind of horrible damage they do when they do not help to train children as pastors, preachers, civil servants, etc., and tell them that God will punish them dreadfully for this. For in our day and age it is necessary to preach about these things. The extent to which parents and governing authorities are now sinning in these matters defies description.⁵²

Luther wrote his Small Catechism to guide pastors in instructing their people, but the intended user of the Small Catechism was the father. Each part of the Small Catechism contains the title, "In a simple way in which the head of a house is to present them to the household" or a similar wording.⁵³ As much as Luther saw the value and importance of a public school system, he recognized that instruction—particularly religious instruction—begins in the home and through the Small Catechism, he sought to assist parents in this task.

⁵¹ F. V. N. Painter. *Luther on Education*. (Concordia Publishing House, 1889), 167.

⁵² SC Preface 19-20 in Kolb and Wengert, 350.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 351ff.

Catechumens

An interesting phenomenon took place in the early Christian Church in the days, weeks, and years following Pentecost. A priority of adult education was necessary due to the majority of adult converts. From this need of adult instruction the catechumenate developed. Running perpendicular to the Roman social customs of the time in that children received education in the home, Christian adults were receiving instruction from the church, lasting as long as three years for each individual.

Gradually, as more and more of the adult converts were instructed, the need for the catechumenate seemed not as pressing and the church turned focused its attention elsewhere. Adults still received religious instruction from the church, but in a less organized and intentional way. “Worship was not only an end in itself but a means of education.”⁵⁴ This heavy reliance upon worship as a source of education for the common people continued into the Middle Ages and arguably continues today. Worship bearing the burden for adult Christian education does not suggest that leaders of the church failed to recognize the ongoing importance of Christian education. Testimony from church fathers impress the opposite, stating the need for Christian education in an adult life because it has practical purpose. Habben paraphrases these sentiments of Augustine and Clement of Alexandria with apt and memorable remarks. “The purpose of any Bible class is not to make spiritual smarty-pants out of God’s people so they can answer all the questions in Bible Trivial Pursuit. No, we want God’s people to know God’s Word, to believe it, and to put it into practice.”⁵⁵ For a long period of the Christian church, it is striking that the primary vehicle for adult education, worship, is an intergenerational activity.

Israelite instruction

With the scattering of Israelites in the Babylonian captivity, synagogues were established as places of worship. In addition, these synagogues became places for scribes and rabbis to instruct young and old in God’s Word. While the custom developed of sending boys to the synagogue beginning at age six, this was not made a mandatory practice until 64 A.D.⁵⁶ Up until the Babylonian captivity, Israel maintained an informal education system powered by parents.

⁵⁴ James E. Reed and Ronnie Prevost. *A History of Christian Education*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 79.

⁵⁵ Daniel Habben, “St. Augustine Taught the Catechumens and So Do We” (Paper presented, *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Symposium, Mequon, WI, September 2015*), 4.

⁵⁶ Reed and Prevost, 49.

Schools for prophets and priests did exist, but only with the function of training future prophets and priests.

Priests and prophets did however possess a role in educating all the people. The primary avenue for this Israelite instruction took place in their worship life through rituals and ceremonies. The priests taught and explained the laws God had given to the people.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the prophets concerned themselves with instructing the people's conduct to align with God's law.⁵⁸ Above all this, the home began and dominated the educational life of Israel. As clearly expressed in the Torah, parents were the primary instructors of their children.

Scriptural Support

An examination and confirmation of Scriptural principles is necessary for the findings of history and scientific research to have any foothold in the in the ministry of the church. Dozens of passages exist emphasizing the importance of instruction and growth in God's Word, but certain key passages rise to the top of the list in terms of their significance in a conversation of intergenerational education. Some express the parental responsibility as spiritual caregiver being encouraged and fulfilled through instruction. Others exhibit the lessons parents can learn from their children.

Deuteronomy 6:4-8

*4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*⁵⁹

These words stood as the foundation of Israelite life. Every Israelite could recite the Shema, named for the first Hebrew word of the Deuteronomy 6:4. More important than the historical significance of Israelites holding these words of God as a confession of faith to pass to their children is what God communicates with them.

⁵⁷ C. B. Eavey, *History of Christian Education* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 55.

⁵⁸ Reed and Prevost, 47

⁵⁹ All Scripture passages are quoted from the NIV.

Moses is relaying the instructions that God handed down to him to teach the people.⁶⁰ These instructions consist of three parts. First, there is proclamation of truth, verse 4. The second part, verse 5, is a command for the whole person to respond to verse 4. The third part, verses 7 through 9, is an extension of the second part, the command. By impressing the command of verse 5 upon children, an Israelite himself would be walking in obedience to the command to love the LORD.

At the same time, verses 7-9 identify spiritual instruction as a specific responsibility entrusted to parents. Paul emphasizes this responsibility in Ephesians 6:4. “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” Christian education is supposed to start in the home. To use these as proof passages for intergenerational education on account of the parent’s responsibility to pass God’s Word onto their children not only misses the point, but ignores the context of the passages. The manner God displays in communicating his Word in Deuteronomy separates generations in learning. God gives Moses his Word, Moses speaks to the assembly made up of the leaders of the families, and those family leaders in turn teach their children.

An intergenerational education setting would have had Moses addressing adults and children alike. The purpose of the passages from Deuteronomy is not to find a descriptive—let alone a prescriptive—scenario of intergenerational education being used in biblical history. The point is the principles God gives through it. Besides emphasizing the parental responsibility to spiritually instruct children, Deuteronomy 6:5-8 stresses the importance of holding onto and sharing these truths in every aspect of life, listing examples of home, along the road, lying down, and getting up. God’s Word is not something to be merely handed down, but discussed with children as verse 7 says, “Talk about them.” Deuteronomy does not exhibit the mode of intergenerational education, but the principles of impressing biblical truth through discussion are put into action through an intergenerational education setting. This gives parents not only an opportunity to speak about Scripture with their children, but encourages and guides them in it.

Matthew 28:19,20

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

⁶⁰ Cf. Dt 6:1.

Christ's Great Commission often is quoted as a key passage for evangelism and rightfully so. With these words, Jesus shows the necessary actions for making disciples. Proclaiming the gospel and baptizing in the name of the Triune God is critical, but that is not the complete package. Discipleship does not end with conversion; it has just begun. Christ clearly commands his church to instruct its members according to all of his teachings. The phrase of "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" applies directly to a key benefit of intergenerational education. Instruction in God's Word does not consist only in presenting information from God's Word, but includes the necessary tools and training to follow Christ's commands.⁶¹ Intergenerational education offers that training to the parent while at the same time enabling parents to carry out their role as spiritual caregiver right within the Bible class.

2 Timothy 3:16,17

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

This passage clearly designates teaching, among others, as a proper use of Scripture. If that is all the reader understands from this passage, he has grasped biblical truth, but unfortunately has overlooked Paul's main purpose. The teaching that the apostle refers to has a specific goal, as shown in verse 17. To grow in knowledge and understanding of the truths that God has revealed is no doubt a good work, but to limit the reference of teaching to imparting knowledge places more restrictions than the passage does. With the adjective "every," Paul includes any kind of good work. Teaching should aim at the head and heart, but also at the lips and hands. The case studies examined demonstrated intergenerational education accomplishing just that. 1 Timothy 3:16,17 clarify and crystalize the point made with Matthew 28:19,20. Teaching equips. Intergenerational education creates an atmosphere where the equipping is being taught not in an artificial case study, but through real interactions between parents and children.

Matthew 18:1-5

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. 3 And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of

⁶¹ Cf. "Matthew 28:19 and the Mission of the WELS," p. 34,35. In their exegesis, the committee identifies the content of the teaching as third use of the law. The application of intergenerational education fits nicely with this by emphasizing to parents their duties to instruct their children while at the same time instructing the parents in how they are to parent and teach their children.

heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

In response to the disciples' prideful question, Jesus directs them to a child. Jesus uses a child to instruct them, showing that they had something to learn from the life of a child. When Jesus says that his disciples must change and become like a little children to enter the kingdom of heaven, by no means is he suggesting a physical regression or even an intellectual one, but with the metaphor highlights the status of a child.⁶² Children are completely dependent upon others to survive. The disciples and all believers are to imitate this dependency in their relationship with God.

With this lesson, Jesus uses a child as an illustration to teach the disciples about faith. The more concrete and connected to life an illustration is, the more it resonates with people. For parents, children shape their world, making them effective comparison points. Using children as examples can be effective even without their presence, but intergenerational education presents the opportunity to make the illustration even stronger. Illustrations pointing to children have a built-in visual aspect, even if the illustration is not referring to any specific child. In addition, the possibility exists to demonstrate the point with a child instead of just describing it.

Titus 2:1-7

1 You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. 2 Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. 3 Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. 4 Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. 6 Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. 7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good.

A number of intergenerational education implications come from the set of passages in Titus. An example is shown of an older generation learning from a younger generation. Titus was a young pastor and while he was an adult and not a child, nonetheless the intergenerational

⁶² R. T. France, *The Gospel according to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 270. The point of comparison in these verses is often misinterpreted as a characteristic of children, such as humility. While that would support intergenerational education strongly by showing that adults have something to learn from children, the context and grammar does not lean towards that understanding as strongly. For a fuller explanation of the interpretation promoted by France, along with a culturally historical view of Scripture, cf. Gibb's *Matthew 11:2-20:34*, p. 887-902.

point from verse 7 is clear and applicable to this discussion. Setting an example is not dependent on age.

At the same time, the concept of instructing by example is an opportunity provided to parents through intergenerational education. Not only does the leader of the Bible class model spiritual discussion between adults and children, but the parents are also given the opportunity to be examples to their children and fulfill their roles as spiritual caregivers through their participation in the class. Following the command of Deuteronomy 6, intergenerational education lets parents impress the Word of God on their children, by letting children be witnesses to their parents' faith.

The content that Paul instructs Titus to teach is directed toward godly living. Not every situation in the Christian life can be simulated or roleplayed within a classroom setting, but practice is essential to learn and grow. To practice respect, self-control, kindness, and the like as Paul lists only requires people present with whom you interact. For the sake of parents practicing this in their relationships with their children, intergenerational education offers that opportunity to learn in an authentic way.

Finally, Paul's directions to Titus are to teach the older members so that they can teach the younger ones. As stated before in connection with the passages from Deuteronomy 6, this does not necessarily have to be done through intergenerational education, nor do these words lean toward such a class structure. A different teaching paradigm could be adopted to accomplish this objective. The point, however, is that God instructs one generation to teach another. Intergenerational education, as shown by research documented in this thesis, fulfills that task as all generations learn with each other and from each other.

CONCLUSION

Intergenerational education provides parents with valuable learning opportunities. Such benefits would be advantageous for the Christian parent, prompting a discussion to incorporate intergenerational education within a congregation's Christian education plans and procedures. Various circumstances may indicate a different route to take, but intergenerational education at least deserves initial consideration because of the scientific, historical, and biblical support.

The case studies give clear evidence that parents learn from their children. This is something that happens without attempts to achieve it. If not through intergenerational education, the church will need to contemplate another way to encourage and enable such learning. Perhaps the most significant implication of the findings from the case studies is the open conversations that grew between parents and children through intergenerational education. If used in a congregation, these conversations among families have the potential to cultivate relationships around the Word of God. The practices developed in class are carried home over time and as families gather around the Word, they grow closer. The family confronts personal challenges together, encouraging one another. Parents become more comfortable and capable of fulfilling their roles as spiritual leaders of the home.

Such outcomes branching off from case study conclusions applied to life in the church are visions of possible benefits. The specific benefits these case studies suggest are growth by the parent in understanding, communicating, and gaining perspective. As these benefits translate into spiritual growth, intergenerational education has certain practical appeal for the Christian parent.

History does not present intergenerational education as foolproof, but it does not present its concepts as novel either. Its closest form of family clusters never seemed to gain traction. However, intergenerational education does align with history's dominant theme of parents holding educational responsibility. In the end, no definitive statement from the recorded history of the Christian church's history can be made. Throughout history, a significant amount of informal Christian education has gone unrecorded, which may have even exhibited more intergenerational aspects than what is history has documented. The development of adult Christian education, while always present, has seen a recent emphasis within the Christian church. This permits the possibility for intergenerational implementation, or adult Christian education might move in a different direction.

Finally, Scripture supports the principles behind intergenerational education and the benefits it offers. A review of these key Scripture passages reveals potential weaknesses in the current common educational structures in equipping parents to teach their children. This does not mean intergenerational education is the most desired method to accomplish all educational goals. Intergenerational education possesses weakness where classrooms divided by age have strengths. Each method serves its own purpose and the circumstances of the congregation will dictate with purpose needs to be met. Scripture does not prescribe, or explicitly even describe intergenerational education, but intergenerational education does agree with and promote God's will for Christian education and is thus a viable option.

This study only examined a small sampling of the research that intergenerational education has to offer. The lack of case studies within a church's context is a considerable weakness and is an avenue that deserves further research. The case studies of this thesis revolved around Western European culture and its participants. These findings may not necessarily reflect the learning parent of another culture, nor is it necessarily an accurate comparison for culturally diverse congregations. In addition, the findings of this thesis are by no means exhaustive even within its limitations. Many more case studies could be examined, historical research dug into, and Scripture references expounded. The findings in this thesis are a sampling to demonstrate some of the benefits intergenerational education offers parents, but should not be understood as the only benefits it gives.

Many possibilities exist for further research to expand upon this topic. In the thesis, parents were grouped together as they were examined, but a separate study of the father and mother individually as learners would contribute to the discussion of a parent as an intergenerational learner. Instead of examining the learning of a parent, another participant of the intergenerational education setting, such as the child, teenager, college student, or retiree, could be viewed. An analysis of what the leader of an intergenerational education class learns would also be an interesting topic. Another avenue with a plethora of options is the impact of mixed cultures within intergenerational education or intergenerational education in another culture as a whole.

Finally, before a Christian congregation adopts intergenerational education, the teaching methodology to properly put it into practice needs to be evaluated. Appropriate curriculum must be addressed. Teaching techniques must be precisely chosen and practiced. The language usage

of the leader confronts a difficult challenge to resolve. Intergenerational education offers potential for growth for parents and others. The practical implementation of intergenerational education in the church awaits further research.

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