

EQUIPPING

for intergenerational ministry

Encouraging intergenerational worship



Intergenerational worship is worship in which people of every age are understood to be equally important. Each generation has the same significance before the face of God and in the worshiping congregation.

Howard Vanderwell, The Church of All Ages.

The worship life of a congregation can often be a point of passionate discussion. Every worshipper seems to have their own preferences when it comes to how to worship. Our preferences are driven by our consumeristic attitude. Too often we run the risk of worshipping in a way that satisfies our personal preferences rather than worshipping the one true Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Churches have fully consumed consumerism... It is impossible for us to constantly feed our own preferences and have energy to help those outside.

Ed Stetzer

To worship is to declare the worth or value of something or someone above all else. The Ten Commandments make it clear that we are to worship the one true God. (Exodus 20:5)

At the heart of Christian worship is Jesus and his sacrifice for our salvation. As broken and sinful human beings, we stand before God and receive his grace and, in turn, we honour Jesus as Lord. When we truly worship we forget about ourselves and instead simply celebrate what Jesus has done for us.

Worship is not something to be consumed. True worship should never be tailored to people's tastes. Worship on earth will always be imperfect. We will not like everything.

In worship we celebrate the identity God has given us in Jesus. Our worship keeps us aware of who we are, who God is and what he has done for us.

When all generations come together to worship as one, it is hard work, because we are working cross culturally. Every generation has its own culture and we must never assume we understand another person's culture. Worship can reflect the wonderful diversity of different ages and cultures coming together.

Working towards intergenerational worship

What can we do to help the generations worship together?

Here are some suggestions to teach and practise:

1. Teach that worship is not about *me and God*, it is about *us and God*.
2. Appreciate the presence of the people you are worshipping with, and focus less on whether a song is to your liking.



3. Help everyone understand how each generation thinks and communicates. For example, different generations may have alternative meanings for the same words.
4. Look for opportunities for children, young people and adults to serve in worship together (e.g. communion serving, readings, prayers).
5. Help the senior generations to make allowances so that the younger generations can understand and participate. Similarly, help the younger generations learn from the more senior generations and understand their convictions.
6. Encourage people to relax and be themselves.
7. Help young parents feel welcome and comfortable to worship with their children (e.g. provide quiet bags or colouring sheets and pencils).
8. Provide opportunities for people to listen to and learn from each other across the generations by including conversations as part of the worship time.
9. Make time for people to share their stories of how God has been working in their lives. Sharing personal stories helps to build community.
10. Aim to use the best of the old hymns and the best of the new songs that focus on what Christ has done for us.
11. When sharing the message, remember that your role is to help God's story interact with the people's stories by sharing what the Holy Spirit shows you. Experiment with sharing one message that speaks to all ages. Seek to speak into the lives of as many generations as possible. Find ways for people of all ages to ask questions, comment and reflect together or do a creative activity. Consider sharing your messages using a variety of media and imagery. Preaching intergenerationally will work best if the entire service follows the same theme.
12. Don't plan alone. Bring together a team of people from across the generations to help brainstorm, plan and lead your intergenerational worship.
13. Provide opportunities for people to participate during the worship time. This could include having prayer ministry during communion distribution or having an activity table available during the sermon.

Intergenerational worship has the potential to benefit all generations because it causes us to focus on the needs of others and not just our own needs. Be willing to take risks, experiment with different ideas, be creative, ask the congregation for patience.

As generations come together in worship to receive God's grace, praise Jesus and speak faith aloud. We are participating in mission and passing on faith to the next generation so that future generations yet to be born may one day worship God too! (Psalm 102:18)

What would it take for your worship gatherings to become more **intentionally** intergenerational?

Can we stop worshipping our preferred forms of worship and think intergenerationally?

Let's learn to appreciate all kinds of worship and take the time to praise God for all he has done for us and thank him for loving us unconditionally. Help us to take advantage of the wonderful opportunities each generation brings as we all worship the one true God together.

