

IN THIS GENERATION

TAKING YOUR PLACE AS A
GENERATIONAL LEADER

**THE MISSION
HAS NOT CHANGED.
THE QUESTION IS...
WILL YOUR GENERATION
FINISH THE TASK?**

Every generation is given a moment. A mission. A mantle. Some rise to the occasion. Some drift. And some leave it to the next generation incomplete.

This book is a call to believers in every walk of life to embrace their God-given responsibility and take their place as generational leaders.

**THE WORK CONTINUES.
THERE ARE OTHERS.
TIME FOR YOU TO
BECOME ONE.**

Acts 13:36

For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep...

TIM HOWINGTON

In This Generation: Taking Your Place as a Generational Leader

Copyright © 2026 Tim Howington

All Rights Reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system—without prior written permission from the author, except for brief quotations used in reviews or critical articles.

Table of Contents

Introduction — The Assignment of a Lifetime

1. You Were Made for This Work
2. What Is a Generation?
3. Responsibility
4. Calling
5. Commitment
6. Character
7. Catalyst

Conclusion — Before You Sleep

Introduction — The Assignment of a Lifetime

When I was a young man, I was exposed to an idea that has stayed with me for decades. It came from a man with the Navigators, and the phrase was simple:

“Many aspire. Few attain.”

What he meant was this: a lot of people start well... but not nearly as many finish well.

I came to faith in my early twenties. Everything was new. Fresh. Alive. And like most young believers, I wanted to do well in my Christian life. I wanted to follow Jesus, not casually, but seriously. So when I heard that phrase—many aspire, few attain—it stuck. It unsettled me in the right way.

Because if that was true, then I had to ask a hard question:

What if I’m one of the many who start well... but don’t finish?

That question shaped more of my life than I realized at the time.

I had just graduated from the University of Arkansas with a degree in computer science engineering. On paper, I had a clear path. But internally, I sensed something else—I wasn’t prepared spiritually. I hadn’t been trained. I didn’t have the kind of foundation that I thought would carry me over a lifetime of walking with Christ.

And if I was honest, I felt vulnerable to becoming the very person I didn’t want to be.

So I made a decision.

I stepped into a two-year ministry internship. I learned how to study the Bible. I learned the basics of theology. I learned how to walk with God in a more intentional way. And somewhere along the way, something shifted in me.

I fell in love with discipleship.

I fell in love with the Scriptures.

I fell in love with the idea of helping others follow Jesus.

When the college ministry I was part of began sending people out to serve as campus directors, I was invited to go. And I said yes.

Looking back, that decision didn’t just shape my career—it shaped my life.

This book comes out of a different season.

I'm now in my early sixties. That's not old—but it's old enough to start thinking differently. You begin to realize that whatever perspective you've gained, whatever lessons you've learned, whatever instincts you've developed over time... they're not meant to stay with you.

They're meant to be passed on.

Because there's a reality we don't talk about enough:

Every generation has a window.

And that window doesn't stay open forever.

In Acts 13:36, David is described this way:

“For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep...”

That's it. That's the whole summary.

He served God's purpose—in his generation—and then he was gone.

That verse has been turning over in my mind.

What would it look like if every generation took that seriously?

What if one generation intentionally called out to the next—encouraging them, preparing them, even challenging them—to step into their responsibility?

What if we didn't assume the mission would just continue?

What if we treated it like something that had to be handed off?

That's what this book is about.

It's about generational responsibility.

It's about the calling each generation receives—and the decision each generation must make.

Will we accomplish what God has given us to do?

Or will we leave it unfinished for someone else to pick up?

I've started asking another question too:

What has my generation actually accomplished?

Not just individually—but collectively.

What have we done with the gospel?

With the resources we've been given?

With the opportunities in front of us?

And just as importantly:

What are we preparing the next generation to do?

Because the truth is, there is coming a day—sooner than we think—when those of us who have been carrying this will no longer be here to do it.

And when that day comes, it doesn't stop.

It shifts.

So this is a discipleship book—but maybe not in the way you expect.

It's not just about personal growth.

It's about responsibility across time.

It's about understanding that what you have received... you are now responsible for.

And that before you're done, it must be passed on.

My hope is simple:

That you would take your place.

That you would see your generation clearly.

And that you would determine—by God's grace—to accomplish what He has given you to do...
in this generation. Your generation.

Chapter 1 — You Were Made for This Work

One of my favorite passages in Scripture is Ephesians 2:8-10. Verses 8 and 9 are familiar to many of us:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

There is a foundational truth here that we cannot afford to get wrong.

God did not include good works in our salvation.

He didn’t leave the door open for us to contribute, even a little bit, so that somehow we could share in the glory. Because if works were part of salvation, then man—being what he is—would eventually point back to himself and say, “Look what I have done.”

But that was never God’s plan.

God’s plan was this: humanity, wrecked by sin, needed a Savior.

So the Father sent the Son.

Jesus came, lived, and went to the cross—according to the Scriptures. He was buried, proving that He truly died. He rose again, proving that He had overcome death and the grave. He remained for forty days, showing Himself alive, removing all doubt. Then He ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now reigns—waiting for the day when He will return to make all things right, establishing His kingdom in the new heaven and the new earth.

Salvation is complete.

It is in Christ alone.

By grace alone.

Through faith alone.

There is no confusion here.

But then we come to verse 10, and the conversation shifts:

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

This verse is just packed with meaning.

Works are not part of our salvation... but they are absolutely part of what comes next.

Not to earn anything.

Not to prove anything.

But to live out what God has already done.

The word “workmanship” is the Greek word *poiēma*. It’s where we get the word poem. You could say it this way:

We are His masterpiece.

His craftsmanship.

His expression.

His hands and feet in a world that desperately needs Him.

And according to this passage, God has already prepared works for us to walk in.

Think about that.

Not random activity.

Not self-generated purpose.

But prepared beforehand.

That has implications—not just for individuals, but for entire generations.

Each of us has something to accomplish.

And together, we have something to accomplish.

I’ve always found it interesting—even though I’m not much of a political guy—that God seems to raise up certain kinds of leaders at certain times. A nation will face a particular challenge, and suddenly a leader emerges with the exact kind of temperament or skill set needed for that moment.

It happens at a macro level.

But it also happens at a micro level.

If you've ever been part of a board—whether a board of directors, a group of elders, or a leadership team—you know how this works. When it's time to bring in new people, you don't just look for warm bodies. You look for the right person for the next season.

Someone with a specific skill set.

A perspective you don't currently have.

A strength that matches the moment.

And more often than not, the right person shows up at the right time.

That's not accidental.

That's how God works.

The same principle applies to generations.

Every generation is placed in a moment.

And every generation is given something to do in that moment.

Let me give you an example from the missions world.

In the early days of modern missions, many organizations positioned themselves along the coastlands of unreached regions. You even see it reflected in their names. They established a foothold—an entry point—on the edges of countries like China or across parts of Africa.

That was their assignment.

They weren't finishing the task.

They were opening the door.

Then another generation came along.

And they moved inland.

They built on what had already been established and pressed the work further into the heart of those regions.

But here's what's fascinating.

In places like Africa today, many of the people who were once considered the mission field are now becoming a mission force. They are sending. They are going. They are taking responsibility for the gospel—not just receiving it.

That didn't happen in one generation.

It took several.

Each one doing its part.

That's the point of this chapter.

God has prepared works for you.

Individually.

But also collectively—as part of your generation.

You are not here by accident.

You are not just filling time.

You have been placed into a specific moment in history, with specific opportunities, specific challenges, and specific assignments.

And the question is not whether those works exist.

The question is:

Will you walk in them?

And maybe just as important:

Will your generation?

Chapter 2 — What Is a Generation?

Let's stop for a moment and ask a simple question:

What is a generation?

When people talk about generations today, they usually mean age groups. That's helpful—at least as a starting point.

For example, here in the United States, we tend to group people like this:

- The Silent Generation (roughly 1928–1945)
- The Boomer Generation (1946–1964), coming out of World War II
- Generation X (1965–1980)
- The Millennial Generation (1981–1996)
- Generation Z (1997–2012)
- And now, Generation Alpha (2013 and beyond)

Those labels help us see patterns—shared experiences, cultural shifts, common perspectives. They give us a way to talk about people who came of age in similar moments.

But that's just one layer.

Because when you step back, generations have been unfolding long before we started naming them.

If you zoom out further, you begin to see generations not just as age groups—but as movements across time.

Think about the history of the Church.

There were generations that focused on establishing the early Church—laying foundations, spreading the gospel, forming communities of believers. Then came generations that wrestled deeply with doctrine, giving us the creeds and councils that clarified what we believe.

Later, you see reforming generations—men and women who challenged corruption and called the Church back to truth during what we now call the Reformation. Then came revival movements, awakenings, missionary expansions—each generation stepping into its moment, responding to the needs and challenges in front of it.

They weren't all focused on the same thing.

But each one had something to do.

You see this even more clearly when you look at the story of Israel.

God calls Abraham—to be blessed and to be a blessing. Then come Isaac and Jacob—the patriarchs. Jacob becomes Israel, and his sons become the tribes.

A nation is formed.

They go into Egypt. Four hundred years pass. They are enslaved. Then God raises up Moses, delivers them, and brings them into the land.

And from there, the pattern begins.

Some generations walk closely with God.

Others drift.

Some rise to the moment—like the men of 1 Chronicles 12:32, who understood their times and knew what Israel should do.

Others forget.

And when they forget, God raises up judges. Then kings. Some good, some bad. The nation divides. The northern kingdom falls to Assyria. The southern kingdom falls to Babylon.

It's a mixed story.

Faithfulness... and failure.

Clarity... and confusion.

Obedience... and drift.

And yet, through it all, God continues to work His plan—until ultimately the Son of David, Jesus Christ, comes.

So what is a generation?

In its simplest sense, it is this:

A group of people, living in a specific period of time, given an opportunity to accomplish the purposes of God in that moment.

Some people like to say that history is really His story—God unfolding His purposes over time. And if that’s true, then generations are the way He moves that story forward.

Each one is given a window.

Each one is given a responsibility.

Each one has a part to play.

But here’s what becomes clear when you study it:

Not every generation does it well.

Some carry the faith forward.

Some protect it.

Some expand it.

And some... lose ground.

That’s just reality.

Which brings us back to where we are.

I’m part of what you might call the Boomer generation—though on the younger side of it. And if I’m honest, our generation has been a mixed bag.

There are things we’ve done well.

There are things we haven’t.

And that creates a moment for reflection.

Not just about “us” as a group—but about me.

And about you.

Because while this book is about generations, it’s not only about generations.

It's also about individuals within them.

Scripture gives us examples of people who could say, with confidence, that they did what they were called to do.

David is described in Acts 13:36 as a man who accomplished the purposes of God in his generation.

Paul said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course..."

Jesus said, "I have accomplished the work which You have given Me to do."

That's personal.

That's not just generational.

So yes, we need to think about our generation.

We need to ask whether we, collectively, are accomplishing what God has given us to do.

But we also need to ask a more direct question:

Am I?

Because in the end, a generation is made up of individuals.

And the faithfulness of a generation is simply the accumulation of the faithfulness of its people.

So don't get lost in the big picture.

Don't hide behind what your group is doing—or not doing.

This is about your moment.

Your assignment.

Your opportunity to step into what God has prepared.

And to be able to say, when it's all said and done:

I did what He gave me to do... in this generation.

Chapter 3 — Responsibility

I've noticed something about myself over the years.

Sometimes I can be pretty easygoing—happy-go-lucky, take things as they come. But other times, I feel the weight of responsibility in a way that's hard to live with.

A friend once looked at me and said, “Man, you are so serious. Responsibility seems to weigh heavily on you.”

He wasn't wrong.

I've thought about where that comes from. Maybe some of it traces back to my childhood. When my parents divorced in the early 70s, I was the oldest. And if you've been the oldest in a situation like that, you probably understand—there's a tendency to take on more than you should.

I remember sitting in a counseling session with my mom and siblings. I must have been eleven or twelve. The counselor asked a strange question:

“Who's in charge around here?”

Without hesitation, my younger brother, my sister—and even my mom—pointed at me.

That moment stuck.

Not because I consciously decided to carry responsibility for everyone—but because something in me started to believe that if things were going to hold together, someone had to step in.

That instinct has shown up in different ways over the years.

I've always had a desire to not be controlled by my environment—to not just react, but to act. I remember teaching my son how to defend himself when he was younger. I told him, “There's really only one rule in a fight: never get on the bottom of the pile. Do whatever you have to do to get out from under it.”

That may sound a little intense, but it reveals something deeper.

There's a part of me that believes things don't just work out on their own.

They have to be worked out.

If you were to look up the word responsibility in a dictionary, you'd find something like this:

> Responsibility: the state or fact of having a duty to deal with something, or of having control over someone.

At its core, responsibility is about ownership.

It's a commitment to make something happen—or to make sure something doesn't happen.

It's the willingness to step into a situation and say, "This matters... and I'm not going to leave it to chance."

Over the years, I've come to believe something that may sound a little blunt:

Things don't happen accidentally.

At least not the things that matter most.

There's an old saying that captures it well:

- Some people make things happen
- Some people watch things happen
- And some people say, "What just happened?"

When it comes to responsibility, that first group is the one that changes outcomes.

Now, I'll admit—my perspective may feel a little jaded at times.

My personal management model has often been this: assume that what needs to be done won't get done unless someone is paying attention and following through.

That might sound pessimistic, but it's been shaped by experience.

I've found that most people have good intentions. They really do. But intentions don't always translate into action. And even when action begins, it doesn't always carry through to completion without some level of accountability.

As a leader, I've seen it again and again:

People don't always do what you expect.

They tend to do what is inspected.

And very few people naturally take an assignment, execute it fully, and report back without any prompting.

That's not a criticism—it's just reality.

Which means that responsibility often shows up in the form of follow-through.

If you study history—or even just read biographies of people who have made a significant impact—you'll notice a pattern.

There is almost always a burden.

A sense that something needs to happen... and won't happen unless someone steps in.

A refusal to leave things undone.

A willingness to carry weight that others might overlook.

That's responsibility.

And this matters when we start talking about generations.

Because here's the challenge:

When everyone is responsible... no one is responsible.

If you assign responsibility to a group without ownership, it often dissolves into inaction.

But when individuals within that group step forward—when leaders emerge, when people take ownership—things begin to move.

Systems are built.

Boundaries are set.

Vision is clarified.

Momentum develops.

And progress happens.

This is true at every level.

At a macro level—nations, movements, global missions.

At a micro level—families, churches, businesses, communities.

Responsibility is always personal before it becomes collective.

So when we talk about your generation accomplishing the purposes of God, we have to ask a very practical question:

Who is going to take responsibility for that?

Not just in theory.

Not just as an idea.

But in reality.

Who is going to ensure that what needs to be done... actually gets done?

And that leads to an even more direct question:

Is it you?

Are you the one God is calling to step in, to take ownership, to carry part of that weight?

Not for everything.

Not for everyone.

But for something.

For your family.

For your church.

For your community.

For your corner of the mission.

Because in the end, responsibility is not about control.

It's about care.

It's about looking at what God has placed in front of you and deciding:

This matters too much to leave undone.

And when enough individuals in a generation begin to think that way...

That generation begins to accomplish something worth remembering.

And a generational leader begins to emerge.

Chapter 4 — Calling

My calling into what I would now call generational leadership has always been an interesting thing to evaluate.

When I was younger in ministry, I would often hear people talk about their calling in dramatic terms. They would describe how God pursued them relentlessly—how they resisted, ran, and eventually gave in because God simply would not let them go. Sometimes it was a call to preach, sometimes to lead, sometimes to go somewhere difficult.

And I'll be honest—I always found those stories a little amusing. As if God was limited by some overly dramatic reluctant leader whom God was lucky enough to pick up for His team in the transfer portal.

Not because I doubted them, but because my story didn't sound like that.

So when people would turn to me and say, "Tim, tell us about your calling," I would usually respond a bit sheepishly:

"Well... I'm a sinner. I needed a Savior. Jesus died on the cross for my sins, and I received His forgiveness. Then I discovered that God calls all believers to be involved in the Great Commission...there was an opportunity before me, I felt like I could help, so I took it... so I guess that's my calling."

And honestly, that's still how I see it. See an opportunity. See if I am a fit. If I sense that God is leading me into the opportunity- step up.

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus says:

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

That's not a specialized calling for a few.

That's a general calling for all.

Over time, God has revealed specific expressions of that calling in my life—through the ministries I've been part of, the roles I've stepped into, and the opportunities He's provided. But at its core, my calling has always been simple:

Be involved in what God is doing in the world... and find my place in it.

Early on, I became fascinated with the idea of discipleship.

I heard people talk about being disciples, making disciples, multiplying disciples. But one day I stopped and asked a basic question:

Did Jesus ever actually define what a disciple is?

So I opened my Bible, grabbed a pen, and started in Matthew. I worked my way through the Gospels, marking every passage that described a disciple or what it meant to follow Christ.

I didn't know what I would find.

But what I found was overwhelming.

What Is a Disciple?

Jesus didn't leave the definition vague. He gave clear marks—clear expectations—of what it means to follow Him.

Here are some of those:

- Matthew 28:18-20 A disciple participates in making other disciples
- Luke 14:26 A disciple loves Jesus above all relationships
- Luke 14:27 A disciple embraces sacrifice
- Luke 14:33 A disciple surrenders everything
- John 8:31-32 A disciple continues in God's Word
- John 13:34-35 A disciple is marked by love
- John 15:8 A disciple produces spiritual fruit
- Luke 9:23 A disciple denies self daily
- Luke 9:57-62 A disciple follows with urgency and focus
- Matthew 4:19 A disciple joins Jesus in reaching others

When I finished that study, one conclusion became unavoidable:

Jesus was asking for everything.

Not partial commitment.

Not casual association.

Everything.

And for the first time, I had to wrestle with that.

I realized that I had never fully given myself to anything at that level. So the question became very personal:

Is this something I want to give my whole life to?

That question has shaped the last forty years of my life.

Not perfectly.

Not consistently.

But persistently.

Some people try to soften the idea of a disciple by saying a disciple is simply a student. And there's truth in that. But based on these passages, a disciple is not just a student sitting in a classroom. He or she is a stud or studette.

A disciple is fully engaged.

Fully committed.

Moving toward Jesus—and His mission—with everything they have.

And this is where generational leadership comes into focus.

A generational leader is simply someone who has embraced the call to be a disciple—and to make disciples—within their sphere of influence.

Not perfectly.

Not with massive platform or recognition.

But faithfully.

One passage that has deeply shaped how I think about this is 2 Timothy 2:2:

“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

In that one verse, you see four generations:

Paul → Timothy → faithful men → others also

That’s generational leadership.

Not just across decades—but across relationships.

So when I think about my own life, I don’t think of myself as some great leader.

If I had to describe it, I’d say I’ve lived my life and ministry a lot like I played high school football:

Just a little better than average.

I wasn’t headed to college on a scholarship.

But I was on the field.

Not on the bench.

And that’s how I’ve approached the Great Commission.

If I were to give you a quick snapshot of my journey, it wouldn’t be overly impressive—but it would be real.

I came to faith in 1984 as a junior at the University of Arkansas. While still in college, I began trying to influence others for Christ—leading small Bible studies with a handful of guys.

After graduation, I joined a two-year internship with Student Mobilization. That season became foundational—learning how to study the Bible, how to lead, how to disciple.

From there, I joined staff and served on the University of Arkansas campus, being shaped by strong leadership. Later, I became a campus director in Arkadelphia, where I had the opportunity to share the gospel and disciple young men—many of whom are still walking with the Lord today.

I eventually moved into more administrative roles, helping lead the organization, and later became a regional director—working with younger leaders across Arkansas and Mississippi.

In the early 2000s, I transitioned into a church role, which didn't end the way I had hoped. It was a difficult season—discouraging and humbling. After that, I spent nearly a decade in the restaurant business, where I continued discipling men in a more informal setting.

Eventually, I joined Freedom 5:one Ministries, where I now serve—focusing on financial discipleship and helping people grow spiritually.

That's my résumé.

Not greatness.

Just... faithfulness.

Or at least an attempt at it.

I came to faith at 22. I'm now in my 60s. And while I haven't done this perfectly, I've tried to keep getting back up and stepping back in.

So what is a generational leader?

It's not someone who has massive influence.

It's not someone who does everything right.

It's someone who takes responsibility for the mission of God within their sphere—and keeps going.

Keeps showing up.

Keeps following.

Keeps investing.

Even after setbacks.

Even after failure.

Even when it's hard.

There's a proverb that speaks of the righteous man who falls seven times—and rises again.

That's the picture.

Not perfection.

Persistence.

And if enough people in a generation begin to live that way...

Then something powerful begins to happen.

That generation starts to move.

And the mission moves forward with it.

Chapter 5 – Commitment

Before we get too far away from the last chapter, I want to make something clear.

This idea of generational leadership—it is accessible.

But it is not automatic.

There's a difference.

I don't want to create the impression that only a select few can step into this. You don't have to be born into greatness. You don't have to be a Moses, a David, or a world leader to matter in your generation. Throughout history, God has certainly raised up individuals with massive, visible influence—people like Esther, who was placed “for such a time as this,” or leaders who shaped entire nations.

But that's not the only category.

At the same time, I don't want to cheapen the idea by saying that everyone is a generational leader simply because they exist or have some level of influence.

There is a commitment level that sets this apart.

A generational leader is someone who is not casually engaged.

They are pursuing God.

Running hard after His heart.

After His purposes.

After His mission.

This tension reminds me of a line from the movie *Ratatouille*.

There's a famous chef who writes a cookbook with the phrase, “Anyone can cook.” And throughout the story, people wrestle with what that really means. At the end, a food critic reflects on it and realizes something important:

The chef didn't mean that everyone would become a great cook.

He meant that a great cook could come from anywhere.

That's the idea here.

Not everyone will step into generational leadership.

But anyone could.

So what makes the difference?

It comes down to response.

If you are willing to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind...

If you are willing to love your neighbor as yourself...

If you are committed to the Great Commission...

If you are willing to pursue Him with effort and energy—even in the face of your weaknesses...

Then you can step into this.

You can become someone who impacts others in a way that carries forward beyond your lifetime.

Now, that impact may look very different from person to person.

Some will influence thousands.

Some will influence a handful.

But both matter.

I think about this the same way I think about spiritual gifts.

Scripture tells us that there are different gifts, different environments, and different effects. One person may have the gift of evangelism and lead a few people to Christ in a small setting. Another may have the same gift and stand before thousands.

Same gift.

Different platform.

Different outcome.

But both are faithful.

A classic example of this is the Sunday school teacher who faithfully taught a small group of boys and shared the gospel with them. One of those boys was Billy Graham.

That teacher's influence was quiet, local, and largely unseen.

Billy Graham's influence became global.

But the impact of that teacher cannot be separated from the story.

That's how God works.

So when we talk about generational leadership, we have to keep this in mind:

God determines the scale.

We determine the faithfulness.

He decides where we are placed.

He gives the gifts.

He provides the opportunities.

He determines the reach.

Our responsibility is to respond.

Jesus told a parable that brings this into focus—the parable of the talents.

One servant was given ten talents. Another five. Another one.

The expectation was not the same in terms of quantity—but it was the same in terms of faithfulness.

The one with ten produced ten more.

The one with five produced five more.

Both were commended.

But the one who was given one—and did nothing with it—was rebuked.

Not because he had less.

But because he didn't produce.

And that's the question this chapter is asking:

Are you piddling... or are you producing?

Are you casually engaging—doing just enough to stay connected?

Or are you intentionally investing what God has given you to see something happen?

Generational leaders are not defined by perfection.

They are defined by intentionality.

They step into the gap.

They take ownership.

They move toward the mission.

Even when it's inconvenient.

Even when it's unclear.

Even when they feel inadequate.

So don't disqualify yourself because your sphere feels small.

And don't assume you qualify simply because you're involved.

Instead, ask yourself:

Am I all in?

Am I using what God has given me?

Am I pursuing His purposes with my life?

Because if you are...

Then regardless of scale, visibility, or recognition—

You are stepping into the kind of life that shapes generations.

Chapter 6 — Character

Over time, if you watch leaders closely, you begin to notice something.

From a distance, they can look impressive.

Strong. Effective. Influential.

But as you get closer—when you spend real time with them—you begin to see something else.

Cracks.

Imperfections.

Moments where character doesn't quite match reputation.

And that's not unique to a few leaders. That's true of all of us.

In our church, we are elder-led, and years ago our directional leader developed a simple phrase that has stayed with me. When describing the kind of man who should serve as an elder, he said:

“He has a good reputation with the community... and he deserves it.”

That last part matters.

Not just reputation.

Deserved reputation.

Character is what shows up in the dark.

It's who you are when no one is watching.

When there's no audience.

No platform.

No accountability in the moment.

That's true for anyone.

But it's especially true for a generational leader.

Because the responsibility of influencing others—of shaping lives, families, churches, even movements—is too great to be carried by someone whose character cannot support the weight.

It's possible to go through the motions.

To say the right things.

To lead in visible ways.

To create the appearance of impact.

But without character, it doesn't hold.

Eventually, it cracks.

When Jesus described leadership, He didn't point to power or position.

He pointed to service.

In Mark 10:43-45, He said:

“Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant... For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...”

He never discouraged ambition.

He just redefined it.

If you want to be great—serve.

That's what the moment of Him washing the disciples' feet was all about. It wasn't just an act of humility. It was a model.

Leadership flows from character.

And character expresses itself through service.

So as we talk about generational leadership, we have to pause here.

Because you can have:

- Calling

- Commitment

...but without character, it won't last.

Let me ask you a simple question:

Who are you, really?

Not the public version of you.

Not even the version your family and close friends see.

But the real you.

The one only God fully knows.

The one you know when you're honest.

What does that person's character look like?

When I think about character, there are two lists I come back to again and again.

The first is the qualifications for elders in Scripture—men who are to lead the church. When God established His church, He didn't say, "Look for the most gifted." He said, in essence, look for the most trustworthy.

The second is the fruit of the Spirit:

- Love

- Joy

- Peace

- Patience

- Kindness

- Goodness

- Faithfulness

- Gentleness

- Self-control

Those are not personality traits.

They are evidence of a life being shaped by the Spirit of God.

And if I'm honest, this is where the struggle becomes real.

Because I can put on a good face.

I can act patient.

I can appear kind.

I can look composed.

But the question underneath it all is:

Is it real?

Am I actually experiencing joy?

Am I genuinely walking in peace?

Or am I just managing appearances?

Let me say something that needs to be said:

It is okay to be in progress.

I've been walking with the Lord for over forty years now, and there are still moments when my flesh rises up in ways that surprise me.

Honestly, sometimes it scares me.

You would think that after this much time, character would be fully formed.

But the flesh runs deep.

That's why I resonate so much with Romans 7, where Paul says:

“The things I want to do, I don't do... and the things I hate, I do...”

He felt the tension.

And then he asks the question:

“Who will set me free?”

The answer comes in Romans 8:1:

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

That's critical.

Because somewhere in this journey of developing character, we have to hold two truths at the same time:

- We are not yet what we will be
- And we are not condemned for where we are

We are in a process.

A sanctification journey.

And one day, we will see Him—not by faith, but by sight—and something in us will be completed. Whether that completion happens instantly or continues into eternity, we don't fully know.

But we do know this:

Christlikeness is the goal.

So don't confuse the struggle with failure.

Struggle is part of the process.

Giving in... that's different.

A generational leader is not disqualified because they battle the flesh.

They are disqualified when they consistently surrender to it.

So what do we do?

We stay engaged.

We keep short accounts with God.

We confess quickly.

We receive forgiveness.

We extend grace to ourselves—without lowering the standard.

And we keep moving forward.

I can say this with confidence:

My character is stronger today than it was ten years ago.

And ten years before that.

Not perfect.

But growing.

And that's the goal.

Not perfection.

Progress.

Because at the end of the day, generational leadership is not sustained by talent, gifting, or opportunity.

It is sustained by character.

And character is built over time... in the quiet places... where no one sees.

Except God.

Chapter 7 — Catalyst

I'm not a chemist, so I'll admit right up front—I'm borrowing this idea.

But I've been told that in chemistry, certain reactions occur naturally over time. They will happen eventually. But when you introduce a **catalyst**, something changes.

The reaction speeds up.

It becomes visible.

Active.

Dynamic.

And here's the key:

The catalyst doesn't create the reaction.

It just makes it happen faster than it ever would have on its own.

—

That idea translates directly into leadership.

When we talk about **catalytic leadership**, we're talking about a person stepping into a situation—into a group, a relationship, a ministry, a moment—and helping move it toward what God intends.

The potential may already be there.

The calling may already exist.

But without a catalyst, it may sit dormant.

Or move slowly.

Or never fully develop.

—

A catalytic generational leader enters that environment and something begins to shift.

- The process speeds up
- The direction becomes clearer
- The energy increases

- The mission becomes more focused

It's like things that could have happened... now start happening.

—

One of my favorite informal definitions of a leader is simple:

A leader is someone who leads.

Someone willing to step into the gap.

To add value.

To add direction.

To add challenge.

To add momentum.

—

Let me ask you a question.

Are you comfortable in a group that's going nowhere?

Now, I'm not talking about leisure. There's a time for rest. In fact, as I'm writing this, I'm on a three-day fishing trip. I've caught about fifteen trout—not a record, but definitely better than getting skunked.

There's a place for that.

But I'm talking about purpose.

You're in a meeting.

A Bible study.

A work group.

No clear leader.

No clear direction.

What do you do?

Do you sit back and wait, hoping someone else steps in?

Or do you feel something inside you that says:

This needs to move.

—

Generational leaders tend to feel that tension.

Catalytic generational leaders feel it even more strongly.

They see the potential in a person, a group, or a situation—and something in them resists letting it stay stagnant.

They step in.

Not always perfectly.

Not always loudly.

But intentionally.

—

And here's the real test of catalytic leadership:

What happens after you leave?

Do people continue to move forward?

Do they grow?

Lead?

Multiply?

Or was your influence just a moment—a helpful conversation, a good experience—but nothing that carried on?

A generational leader leaves **change behind**.

Sometimes big.

Sometimes small.

But real.

—

That means catalytic leadership requires something many people hesitate to embrace:

Initiative.

It means stepping into the conversation.

Offering your perspective.

Risking being wrong.

Risking being misunderstood.

—

A few years ago, I co-wrote a book on generosity with a friend. As we worked through the content, we realized there were aspects of generosity that we felt were not being clearly addressed—especially the question of *where* we give.

There's a lot of agreement around *why* we give.

There's discussion around *how much* we give.

But *where* we give—that's more complex.

Less defined.

So we decided to step into that space.

—

I'll be honest—that wasn't easy.

It was the first time either of us had really put our thoughts into a broader conversation like that. And with it came questions:

What if people don't agree?

What if we're misunderstood?

What if we're wrong?

That tension is real.

Because catalytic leadership requires you to move from:

- having a thought
- to sharing a thought
- to contributing to a conversation

Maybe even shaping one.

—

And at some point, you have to decide:

Will I stay on the sidelines...

Or will I step in?

—

That's the decision every generational leader faces.

Am I willing to:

- add my voice?
- bring direction?
- challenge the status quo?
- help move something forward?

Or will I stay silent?

—

Because here's the reality:

Movements don't just happen.

Discipleship doesn't just multiply.

The Great Commission doesn't just advance on its own.

People step in.

People take initiative.

People act.

—

So the question becomes:

Are you a catalyst?

Are you willing to step into the fray?

To offer something of value?

To move a group toward its potential?

To risk your comfort for the sake of progress?

—

Because when you combine:

- Calling
- Commitment
- Character

...and you add catalytic leadership—

Now you have something powerful.

—

Not perfection.

But movement.

Not just influence.

But multiplication.

—

And that's what generational leaders do.

They don't just participate in what's happening.

They help move it forward.

And in doing so...

They leave something behind that continues long after they're gone.

Conclusion — Before You Sleep

There's a simple verse that has followed us through this entire book.

Acts 13:36

“For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep...”

It's such a short statement.

No long résumé.

No list of accomplishments.

No explanation of strategy or scale.

Just this:

He served the purposes of God... in his generation.

And then he was gone.

That's how it works.

Generations come.

Generations go.

Yours will too.

There is coming a day—whether we think about it often or not—when you won't be in the room anymore. The conversations will continue. The mission will move forward. The world will keep turning.

But your part in it will be complete.

That's not meant to be heavy in a negative way.

It's meant to be clarifying.

Because it brings everything into focus.

You have a window.

A specific time.

A specific place.

A specific set of opportunities.

Not random.

Not accidental.

Throughout this book, we've talked about what it means to live in this generation.

You were made for this work.

God has prepared things for you to walk in.

You've been placed in a moment that matters—not just historically, but spiritually.

And somewhere along the way, the question shifted from what is happening around me to:

What am I going to do about it?

We talked about responsibility.

At some point, someone has to step in.

Someone has to take ownership.

Not of everything—but of something.

A family.

A group.

A ministry.

A mission.

Because when everyone assumes someone else will do it... nothing happens.

We talked about calling.

Not a mysterious, reserved-for-a-few kind of calling—but a clear, biblical one.

To follow Christ.

To make disciples.

To participate in the Great Commission.

And to find your place in what God is already doing.

We talked about commitment.

This isn't casual.

It's not something you drift into.

It requires intention.

Energy.

Focus.

It's the difference between being around something... and being all in.

We talked about character.

Because whatever you build has to be sustained.

And that doesn't come from gifting or personality.

It comes from who you are when no one is watching.

It comes from a life that is being shaped—slowly, imperfectly, but genuinely—by God.

And finally, we talked about being a catalyst.

Stepping into situations and helping move them forward.

Not waiting for someone else.

Not assuming it will just happen.

But adding something—direction, clarity, energy—that helps what could happen... actually happen.

Put all of that together, and you begin to see the picture.

Not of a perfect person.

Not of a famous leader.

But of someone who simply decides:

I will take my place.

You don't have to lead everything.

You don't have to reach everyone.

You don't have to change the world in some dramatic, visible way.

But you do have to decide what you will do with what you've been given.

Because here's the reality:

The gospel doesn't move forward automatically.

Disciples are not made accidentally.

Generations don't stay faithful by default.

It gets carried.

By people.

In moments.

Like this one.

So the question is not whether something could happen.

The question is whether you will step in and be part of it.

Will you take responsibility?

Will you pursue the calling?

Will you commit fully?

Will you build the character to sustain it?

Will you step in as a catalyst when the moment calls for it?

You don't have to have it all figured out.

You don't have to be perfect.

You don't have to be impressive.

But you do have to be willing.

Willing to follow.

Willing to act.

Willing to stay engaged over time.

Because at the end of it all, your life will be summarized.

Not in every detail.

Not in every moment.

But in essence.

And the hope—the goal—is that it could be said of you what was said of David:

One day, it will be said of you...

You served the purposes of God in your generation.

And then... you slept.