



80 Generations

80 generations

Join us this September as we consider the genealogy of our faith and the mindboggling fact that only 80 generations stand between our lives and when Jesus lived his human life among us.

80 generations with the same commission - 'Go make disciples'.

In our Connect Group study material this month we are going to realise that 80 generations on it is still the same commission the risen Lord gives us as his church. The focus and purpose of our calling and commission is to worship God make disciples. We have a responsibility to share the good news of the gospel with our generation.

Last month in **Habitats of Hope** we were looking *around* at where we find ourselves and now this month we are looking *back* at where we have come from. Not only where, but *who* we have come from. We'll be thinking about time, tradition, innovation, redemption, deliverance, burning bushes, manna from heaven, and the things that that sustain us.

This month we are trying to put time, meaning and purpose into perspective, using the the title 80 Generations. If a generation is 25 years, did you know that it is only 80 generations since Jesus walked this earth in person? In other words, if each generation could shake hands, you would only need to shake 80 hands until you would shake the hand of Jesus. What is even more powerful than that is the nail pierced hand of Jesus can reach out across the generations to touch each of us now. Proverbs 18: 24 reminds us there is one who sticks closer to us than even a brother.

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In Psalm 90 the writer goes further, referring to God's timing as "A thousand years in your sight is as one watch of the night." In the ancient world one watch of the night was about three or four hours. So in God's economy of time, Jesus rose from the dead six hours ago. And when it comes to the stories of the Exodus well they just happened ten and half hours ago.

During September we are going to take four of these interesting stories of deliverance from the book of Exodus and view them as unfinished scenarios, that still have a contemporary connection with our lives, in that they describe the human condition.

We are all people enslaved in time searching for purpose and perspective.

1. *The Burning Bush Story*, is all about broken dreams revisited - Moses called to be a Saviour/Deliverer. What might happen if God revisited our broken dreams?
2. *The Passover Story*, is all about an action or ritual that expresses faith. Jesus took the ritual of the Passover and gave it a new perspective, meaning and purpose.
3. *The story of the 'Brazen Serpent'* links creative imagery with, judgement, forgiveness and faith healing, that goes beyond the power of image. Jesus took the image of a serpent healer, to describe the faith healing message of the cross and life beyond.
4. *The Story of Manna from Heaven*, is all about God's provision for the journey of life. Jesus takes this life sustaining model of bread, and uses it to describe his presence and purpose giving me sanding to the life of the believer.

As we live out our life, scenarios that have still to reach their fulfilment, these four stories help us understand how the history of deliverance and redemption is fulfilled.

In the burning bush, we see lost dreams can be restored. The story of the passover ritual speaks of a redemptive action. In the story of the brazen serpent we see redemptive action points to the response of faith. In the story of the manna from heaven we see God's provision is never far away.

When it comes to understanding a true perspective on our meaning and purpose, Christians believe it is revealed in one overarching narrative of deliverance: the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus plugged his life into these unfinished stories of deliverance in order that we might understand their conclusion.

It is hoped this time of study will help us to reach out and shake the hand of Jesus across the generations. But also to see that the Jesus story speaks into the lives of all of us who are enslaved in 21century materialism and injustice.

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SEEDS TO SOW: Open-ended prompts to inspire creative responses to the themes. Perhaps a song, some drawing, or creative writing! They are short and sweet, simply a starting off place for you and your imagination. Expand, tailor and develop as suits you. Often they take the form of a question, to encourage reflection.

These discussion questions adapt our monthly themes for small Connect Groups or personal Bible study (look up the [80 Generations Resource Pack](#) for more information on this month's theme). The questions are divided into 4 parts to correspond with the 4 weeks of the Daily Worship theme. They are offered as a guideline and there is no need to go through all the given questions in a single session, or in the following sequence. Feel free to pick and choose, or adapt to what interests you or your group.

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STUDY QUESTIONS

Part 1: The Burning Bush

In week one we focus on our attention on three scripture passages that invite us to consider our call to go (Exodus 3: 1-15), the excuses we make (Revelation 3: 14-21), and thirdly the methodology we use when it comes to making disciples (Romans 10: 14-21) — what do we mean by preaching?

SEEDS TO SOW: HOW MUST MOSES HAVE FELT STANDING THERE BEFORE THE BURNING BUSH?

Read Exodus 3: 1-15

The bush still burns... Moses fled Egypt amidst shame and fear. He returns with a new confidence and commission.

Is it possible to be called to complete a task you messed up on earlier in your life? Can you think of people who have had a second chance and succeeded?

Do we write people off too soon?

Could there still be unfinished business God is calling you to do? Is your burning bush still burning to catch your attention?

Read Revelation 3: 14-21

Take off your shoes you'll be here for a while...

Could this be the "Moses Experience" extended to all, "Take off your shoes from off your feet for the place your standing is holy ground"?

80 generations on he still speaks. Take a moment to reconstruct and share a 'Burning Bush' experience in your life? Or in another's life?

Read Romans 10: 14-21

Just go — never mind the excuses...

Here is the call of Moses being recycled for the church. The Apostle Paul is reminding us that God uses people to do his work. Are we listening? Does this verse suggest there is a special significance in preaching when it comes to making disciples? Or is 'preaching' a generic term for being a witness?

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Part 2: The Passover

In week two we ask could the story of the Passover be a metaphor that seeks to engage with much of the present injustice and enslavement of people we see today? Many seeking to find both physical and spiritual deliverance from a world of entrapment and inequality. Is the Exodus story being relived in the lives of people in our generation taking to boats fleeing from oppression and tyranny; while others take to alcohol and drugs, seeking to find redemption.

This week we focus our attention on three passages of scripture that invite us firstly: to consider our personal and spiritual entrapment. Secondly: to understand the significance of Jesus as our saviour, our Passover sacrifice. Thirdly: to understand we are called to use the institution of the Lord's Supper as a fellowship meal of thanksgiving for the old life from which we have been delivered and the new life we have received in Christ.

SEEDS TO SOW: WHAT DO YOU THINK JESUS'S FIRST DISCIPLES WOULD MAKE OF OUR COMMUNIONS TODAY?

Read Exodus 12: 1-14

It's a grizzly tale of sabotage, injustice, fear, and redemption. Is it a tale we recognise in the 21st century?

Discuss its physical and spiritual relevance for our generation.

Read Mark 10: 35-45

Here in this passage Jesus is no longer celebrating the Passover, instead he is completing the Passover. It is out of this story of redemption that Jesus chooses to align his reason for coming into the world.

Why do you think that is the case? Do we need a saviour today?

Read 1 Corinthians 10: 14-33

Do we talk about what Communion enough?

If not, discuss why we should talk more about the meaning and significance of Communion in the life and witness of believers?

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Part 3: The Bronze Serpent

In week three we use the story of the bronze serpent to explore the impact that the crucifixion of Jesus has had on the lives of so many people down through the generations. Why is it that people are drawn to the cross of Christ? We suggest that it is because the cross lifts Jesus high above all humanity. His selfless act of sacrifice has changed the lives of individuals down through the generations.

In our study this week we look at the key verses in the book of Numbers and how God delivers his people from his judgement (Numbers 21: 4-9). We look at how Jesus associates himself with being 'lifted up' (John 3: 13-17). Secondly, we take a look at the experience of those who saw him lifted high, the centurion and the criminal being crucified alongside him (Matt 27: 50-54 and Luke 23: 39-43). Then we reflect on the reality of all that Jesus's death and resurrection has accomplished for all people (2 Corinthians: 5:17).

SEEDS TO SOW: WHAT DOES THE WORD 'DELIVERANCE' MEAN TO YOU?

Read Numbers 21: 4-9

What do you think is going on in this story? Why did Jesus use it to talk about his impending crucifixion?

Read Luke 23: 39-43 and Matthew 27: 50-54

What is it about the cross that attracts or repels you?

Read 2 Corinthians 5: 11-21

What is it that becomes 'new' for the person who is 'in Christ'?

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Part 4: Bread of Heaven

In our final week of *80 Generations* we seek to remind ourselves that we are sustained in our Christian life by developing a personal relationship with Jesus. Just as the Israelites were sustained physically by the manna that fell from the heavens. Jesus used this story to explain that he was the the bread of life. In our study this week we look at the key passage that contains the story of manna (Exodus 16:2-15), then we look at the the narrative contained in the gospel of John in which Jesus explains his identity as the Messiah.

SEEDS TO SOW: WHAT DO YOU PICTURE WHEN YOU HEAR THE PHRASE 'BREAD OF HEAVEN'?

Read Exodus 16: 1-31

What do you think manna looked like and what lessons can we learn about need vs. greed?

Read John 6: 1-15

Manna in a lunchbox...

How do you understand the feeding of the five thousand? Is it that God's grace extends to all, with more that we can ever use?

Read John 6: 48-59

Do we talk enough about the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit symbolised in the act of Communion?