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TIME *After* TIME

Depending on God

If you're lost you can look—and you will find me...

—CYNTHY LAUPER, *SHE'S SO UNUSUAL*, 1983, LEGACY RECORDINGS

Have you ever wondered why, out of all times in history, God chose to place us into an age bracket referred to as “Generation X”?

As much as I love history (I’ve written four novels set during World War II), I’m thankful to live in this age of computers, coffee, and cell phones. In fact, even as I write these words I’m sitting in an Internet café drinking my double-shot, sugar-free mocha frappe, trying to collect my thoughts while an espresso machine whirs in the background.

How did God know I’d love so many things about living in this era, like watching dramatic, high-budget films like *Lord of the Rings*, having e-pen-pals in places like Austria and Aruba, and being able to check e-mail on my camera phone even when I’m miles from home?

Of course, in this day and age there are also challenges unique to our generation when it comes to raising kids. In talking with Gen X parents and reading through the dozens of surveys e-mailed to me, I’ve become aware of some unique worries that our parents never considered, such as:

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- ✿ media's effect on young children
- ✿ how much Nintendo is too much
- ✿ how to fulfill our life's calling while also raising kids

And those are just some of the minor issues—let's not forget the more serious downward spiral of morality in America. If you're like me, sometimes you may wonder just what type of world you've birthed your child into.

But it helps to remember that none of these changes in society are a surprise to God. He's not surprised by Hollywood or Supreme Court decisions. He doesn't shrug His shoulders in bewilderment over MTV or the ACLU. In fact, God not only knew what the world would look like in the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s; *He knew our place in it.*

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and *he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.* God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. (Acts 17:26–27)

One of my favorite techniques for studying the Bible is to check out the Greek/Hebrew definition in the study Bible on my computer. This gives me a better sense of the meaning behind the biblical writers' words.

For example, the word *determined* in verse 26 means "He *arranged* the set and proper times." God not only picked the era in which we were born; He arranged our place in it for a reason.

The next verse goes on to say, "God did this so that men would *seek* him." The word *seek* here means more than the childhood game of hide-and-seek. In fact, another definition for *seek* is "require"—as in "God did this so that men would *require* him and perhaps reach out for him and find him."

Here's MyTake On It: God placed us parents in this time in history because

no matter how bright, or skilled, or committed we are (and our generation is all of these things), achieving success as parents means requiring His involvement in our daily lives.

Although I would never directly credit one of my favorite '80s singers, Cyndi Lauper, with drawing me closer to God, I do imagine the chorus from her song "Time After Time" as words God might use to speak to our generation.

God was aware of the vicious cycles we'd face. He understood we'd be overwhelmed and in need of direction. He knew, as Lauper sings, that we'd sometimes be lost and sometimes feel like we're falling.

He also realized that in order for us to be all we can and to raise children who serve Him, we would be *required* to seek and depend on Him. We would require Him... time after time.

After all, being a generation of parents in a high-speed and morally confused world doesn't allow for anything less.

There is a mysterious cycle in human events. To some generation much is given. Of other generations much is expected. This generation has a rendezvous with destiny.

—Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1936

Say You, Say Me

Say it together naturally...

—Lionel Richie, *Dancing on the Ceiling*, 1985, Motown Records

One of the main characteristics of Generation X parents is that we're very relational. People matter. I don't know about you, but I absorb a lot of parenting information during the day—TV, parenting magazines, Dr. Phil—yet they don't really become concrete in my thinking until I discuss these ideas with a friend.

Just last night, I took a walk with my friend, Tara. Although we didn't go more than a few miles, we conversed on activities we've signed our kids up for, ways to make our hubbies feel good (give his arm muscles a good squeeze

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and compliment his strength), and a dozen other topics about home life.

And you know what? Going on that walk not only revved up my body, but it helped me put into words things I've been wanting to work on and change in my life. In fact, I left our time together with new ideas and new hope for the week ahead.

"We all need encouragement," inspirational speaker Florence Littauer once said. "We *can* live without it just as a young tree can live without fertilizer, but unless we receive that warm nurturing, we never reach our full potential, and like the tree left to itself, we seldom bear fruit."

Do you have a friend you can turn to, talk with, or walk with on this parenting journey? Consider asking a friend or your spouse to read *Generation NeXt Parenting* with you and make an appointment in person, over the phone, or via e-mail to share your thoughts. It will give you someone to bounce ideas off of. And if nothing else, you'll discover that perhaps you're not the only one with parenting insecurities, parenting hopes, and parenting dreams.



My Take On It

“Good friends encourage me as we discuss our struggles and realize we aren’t alone. We pray for each other and share our concerns at Bible study. I make time for me by having an occasional girls’ night out. Fortunately, my husband supports this.”

—Michelle H., Arizona
Born in 1967, mother of two

“Oh, thank God for providing friends! I have another mom whom I talk with almost every single day. It helps both of us to maintain our sanity. I also have other friends from my hometown (now 3 1/2 hours away) that I can e-mail or IM.”

—Jenn, New York
Born in 1972, mother of one

“My closest friend is my husband, Keith. We talk about everything, and I’ve never felt insecure or judged. He’s my support, my rock, and my confidant. I know I can tell him everything, and he won’t think I’m some crazy lady on the edge of life that needs to be medicated!”

—Katie, Texas
Born in 1971, mother of four



BONUS MATERIAL

⚡ *A Peer Personality is a generation persona recognized and determined by (1) common age location; (2) common beliefs and behavior; and (3) perceived membership in a common generation.*¹

DIFFERENT GENERATIONS LOOK AT LIFE DIFFERENTLY

Every one of us is an individual, with a unique set of attitudes, culture, opinions and personality. All of these combine to give us a unique view of events, and they shape our reactions to circumstances. The way in which we process what is going on around us is known as our “world view,” or value system. It’s this part of us that determines what is good or bad, normal or weird, right or wrong. This value system is largely in place by the time we reach our teens.²

Because of its unique value system, each generation also approaches God in a different way.

The authors of *Mind the Gap!* offer the following information:

GI: Born 1900s to 1920s

Silent: Born 1920s to 1940s

Boomer: Born 1940s to 1960s

Xer: Born 1960s to 1980s

Millennial: Born 1980s to 2000s³



STYLE OF WORSHIP

GIs: Formulaic. Attracted to religious events that are rich with pomp and ornate ceremony.

Silents: Quiet, reverential. “Be still and know that I am God” approach.

Boomers: “It’s a Big Message, so spread it in a Big Way.” Slick, professional.

Xers: Intimate, nonjudgmental, personally connected with my God.

Millennials: Eager to integrate all the spiritual threads of their lives. Desire to explore other religious traditions.⁴