

## **GENERATION NEXT**

### **Understanding the Times**

The Apostle Paul said that a Christian's citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20). Your citizenship in the Kingdom of God takes precedence over your citizenship in the U.S. That means, your highest authority is the Bible. We all live under the authority of God's Word. You live in this culture, but you don't live under the authority of this culture.

There has been a shift in beliefs, values, and behaviors in the West. *The next generation of leaders* will be very different than the previous generation of leaders. That means more change is coming to our culture and this will affect you. This is most easily seen in comparing the younger generations with the older generations.

*You can resist the notion of change all you want but the reality is change is upon us.*

Over the course of the next 2 months, I hope we can expose a few of the beliefs that have found their way into the Church from the culture. We want to make sure our values and beliefs are centered in the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The main point of today's lesson:

***The gospel is not limited by time, language or culture.***

If at times you find yourself at odds with the culture or concerned about the culture, that could be a good thing. You might be where you need to be.

The book of Chronicles describes an important time in the history of God's people. They were about to re-enter the Promised Land and needed to learn from their own history. There were some among them that were good at understanding and discerning. The list of people who entered the land included...

*"From the Issacharites, who understood the times and knew what to do."*

***Understood the times and knew what Israel should do:*** This is a discernment of God's will for their own time and culture. This is an interesting description – with all these soldiers prepared for battle as listed in this chapter – there is a group of people who are prepared to discern God's will in their context.

For our times....There are two mistakes to avoid:

- 1) The mistake of looking back is fueled by the myth that Christianity experienced better times in a previous generation and all we need to do is go back to the way it was.
- 2) The mistake of looking forward suggests that our culture is getting better. As if we are leaving behind the tired, old, restrictive, exclusive, privileged way of thinking and are just beginning to allow people to be themselves. These folks would suggest that the best is yet to come.

As Christians, just where should our hope be? We do look back...and we do look forward...but in a very specific way. We look back at Easter weekend. Crucifixion – Resurrection. We look forward to the return of Jesus Christ.

### **Home Group Discussion Questions:**

1. Was there anything in particular that challenged you in this message?
2. What's hard about living as a Christian in this culture? What's not so hard?
3. Do you tend to lean toward a concept of our culture in decline or making progress? What has led you to this view point?
4. Pastor Karl spent some time explaining two Old Testament passages – 1 Chronicles 12:32 and 2 Chronicles 36:22-23. Do either of these passages strengthen your understanding of the need of Christians to pursue God's will in their given cultural context?
5. What's the great event recorded for us in Scripture that gives us hope as Christians? Do you sometimes find your hope drifting to other sources? How can you keep your hope grounded in Jesus?