



Link between the Generations

By Nicolas Kanzleiter

Talking to older people can feel weird, talking to younger people sometimes confusing. Times change and so do hobbies, interests, technology and values. Sometimes teenagers seem to forget that old people used to be young as well, and sometimes old people forget how they felt when they were young, and tend to underestimate the younger generations.

Despite the fact that Peace Church is already pretty good at bringing together all kinds of people, it can't hurt to contribute to that even more. A group of older people from the congregation (and some from around) were asked to write down questions they would like to ask a teenager. These questions then were given to the oldest Sunday School group to answer. The group was then asked to write down questions they would like to ask older people, which were sent back to the first group to answer (two questions were answered twice, my bad...). Who asked and who answered will not be revealed, except for their age. The goal was to create a kind of philosophical exchange and a link between generations. The results can be seen below:

Asked by a 61 year old:

What or who could encourage you to live 4 weeks without Smartphone, Tablet, Computer? To be 4 weeks completely offline.

Answered by a 11 year old:

Persons who don't have phones or internet.

Asked by a 66 year old:

Do you read books (apart from schoolbooks)? If so, what kind of book? Roughly how many in a year?

Answered by a 11 year old:

I read all kinds of books. In a year I'm reading 68 books.

Asked by a 66 year old:

Do you think it is important for us to protect the environment?

Answered by a 14 year old:

Yes, we can get free, unlimited, fresh air. There would be less diseases. The population of animals could increase. There would be less natural disasters and more polar bears.

Asked by a 67 year old:

Do you pray and, if so, what do you pray about?

Answered by a 14 year old:

About friends, family, school, health (a long life), better environment.

Asked by a 67 year old:
What do you use your mobile phone for most, e.g. phone calls, games, taking photos?

*Answered by a 12 year old:
What I use it most for is to make calls and take a lot of pictures and videos. It's fun!*

Asked by a 56 year old:
What sort of career / job would interest you?

For example, medical, with IT, engineering, with animals etc
Answered by a 12 year old:

I would like to do something that has to do with dancing (Hip-Hop), or maybe be an actress.

Asked by a 56 year old:
How would you encourage young people to take care of their health?

*Answered by a 12 year old:
I would make a list, because it's motivating to see what you have achieved. Also, I would prepare post-its with motivating quotes.*

Asked by a 60 year old:
Do you think people will still be driving cars in 20 years time?

*Answered by a 10 year old:
Yes, because for most people it's fun driving.*

Asked by a 60 year old:
How can future generations avoid having wars with each other?

*Answered by a 16 year old:
Every nation should sign a peace contract and every nation should share everything they have. And when you have something against another nation just keep it to yourself and stop killing people. Killing is never an option.*

Asked by a 46 year old:
What is your biggest dream?

*Answered by a 12 year old:
To be rich and healthy. To have a family and live a long life with them.*

Asked by a 46 year old:
What would you change in the school system if you could?

*Answered by a 14 year old:
I would change subjects/the way subjects are taught and the times, at which you have to go to school.*

Asked by a 68 year old:
Are you optimistic or pessimistic about your future?

*Answered by a 15 year old:
I am optimistic about my future because I believe that it will be better than my present.*

Asked by a 57 year old:
Imagine you are 30 years old. How will your life be?

*Answered by a 13 year old:
I hope good. Hopefully I will have a wife and family, a good job, maybe even work as a freelancer.*

Asked by a 57 year old:
You are being offered to start a fashion label. What you design will be produced, advertised and sold (all fair of course) How would your fashion look?

*Answered by a 14 year old:
I would make it look like rich peoples' and famous brands' clothes.*

Asked by a 39 year old:
What kind of topics do you prefer to talk with friends around your age, rather than your parents (perhaps due to awkwardness, or due to different trending topic between generation, or other reason)?

*Answered by a 11 year old:
About boys.*

Asked by a 39 year old:
Which habits or things regularly done by parents or people in older generation, that you think are out-dated / obsolete and

you / your generation may not continue that habit / doing?

Answered by a 12 year old:

I think that they would play old games and talk a lot. They call their children and ask how to use their phones.

Asked by a 39 year old:

What do you hope that your parents will do or help you do (in school, in church, at home, etc.), but they haven't offered the help yet, or you are too afraid to ask them?

Answered by a 11 year old:

I hope that my parents will take me to school now and then. And that we have more fun together.

Asked by a 39 year old:

What do you mostly wish to receive from parents during your birthday? A present / gift (what kind of present), spending special time together (what kind of activities), inviting some friends to celebrate together, or something else?

Answered by a 14 year old:

Money & clothes, getting to hang out and travel with friends, a quick getaway trip, picnic or karaoke. Things that are trending all the time.

Asked by a 59 year old:

If you were allowed to introduce one law in any one country (which could be your birth country, your country of residence or any country of your choosing), which law would you make and in which country?

Answered by a 13 year old:

I would introduce a law in North Korea, because people there need more freedom. I would allow them to choose freely (Travel, watch american/western TV and movies, have more than one child).

Asked by a 59 year old:

Every day of the year you can always give a little something of yourself which costs

nothing and which brings out your unique personality and gifts, what is that for you?

Answered by a 13 year old:

I would give my happiness, my humour and my helpfulness.

Asked by a 65 year old:

How would you spend a weekend – Friday evening to bedtime Sunday – that was completely tech free? That means no phone or laptop, computer or television or movies or recorded music.

Answered by a 10 year old:

Spend the time outside, playing football with my friends.

Asked by a 65 year old:

Do you think God guides young people today?

Answered by a 12 year old:

Yes, I think so, because they also need help.

Asked by a 65 year old:

Have you ever felt God 'come near' to you?

Answered by a 16 year old:

Yes, in times when I was scared, he was with me, so that I didn't have to fear.

Asked by a 65 year old:

What do you think the psalm writer means when he says :

“Be still and know that I am God”?

Answered by a 14 year old:

Don't worry, I am with you.

Asked by a 65 year old:

We read/hear of many Biblical 'heroes' that were young when they became aware of having a role to play in the story of God's people – Samuel (Hannah's son), Joseph (of the many coloured coat), Rebecca (the wife of Isaac), David (who fought Goliath and later became king), Esther (when she was being groomed to be a queen), Mary (the mother of Jesus),

John (the baptizer), John the gospel writer and more.

Do you feel you have something in common with any of them?

Answered by a 15 year old:

Yes, I think that in your daily life you have to face big challenges and problems, like David with Goliath.

Asked by a 61 year old:

How often do you interact with social media? How often do you read something for pleasure (not for school)? If the number of hours on social media is greater than reading for pleasure, how do you think your generation will be impacted?

Answered by a 13 year old:

I sometimes use social media and I usually read in the evening. I think our generation is getting addicted to social media.

Asked by a 14 year old:

What are you going to have to do to take care of your family and parents?

Answered by a 66 year old:

No parents still here, but I will try always to be available and have time for my family.

Asked by a 14 year old?

Are you proud of what you have achieved in your life?

Answered by a 66 year old:

"Proud" might not be the right word. I have tried to do my best, with God's help, and have brought up a family in an atmosphere of love and security. The focus has been on ensuring my family was OK, but I could have done more for others.

Asked by a 11 year old:

How did you get to your job?

Answered by a 46 year old:

I got to my job because I always wanted to work with children. I took in every possibilities to do a "Praktikum" and knew after that that I wanted to be a teacher. That's what I became.

Asked by a 11 year old:

Are you afraid of death? Do you have fears about dying?

Answered by a 46 year old:

I am not afraid of death. When my mother died, I thought of her sitting in a big garden full of flowers without pain and suffering. That is how I imagine it to be.

Asked by a 13 year old:

Do you wish you were born later? (2000s, 90s, 80s, ...)

Answered by a 61 year old:

When I was born, we did not have a TV, we did not even have a phone. Computers, Smartphones did not exist. After school and homework, I had a lot of time. I grew up in a small village. There was not much traffic, so we could play in the streets in summer and winter. In the afternoons, we walked into the forest and played there, until it got dark. I spent a lot of time on the public football playground together with always the same kids and teenagers. I had to walk to school; later to the Gymnasium, I took the bike, 4 km every morning, because my parents did not have the money for a bus ticket. I developed so many skills by growing up in these times, most of these experiences would not be possible anymore, except living far away in very rural areas, but even there computers would waste time. So, in the end: No! I do not wish to be born later.

Asked by a 12 year old:

I feel like older people say many bad words and curse a lot. What do you think about this?

Answered by a 61 year old:

I feel very strongly that this is not a helpful practice, and it certainly isn't a good witness for young people to watch. Just as you raised the question, I would too. There are many other ways to express anger or disappointment or frustration. Go out for a walk or workout at the gym. Go in a closet and yell at the top of your lungs. I was raised from a young age that cursing and bad words are not good, so I don't engage in saying them now as an adult.

Asked by a 15 year old:
Did you ever question the existence of God?

Answered by a 61 year old:

Not really. From a young age, I felt God's presence at significant moments in my life. One time when I was about seven years old, I remember sitting outside on a tree stump and while looking up at the sky, I had the distinct impression that God was real. I'm now 61 years old, and I still feel that way. Thank you for the great question!

Asked by a 14 year old:
Have you ever committed a crime?

Answered by a 67 year old:

I'm thankful to say that I haven't.

Asked by a 13 year old:
What should I do before I die?

Answered by a 67 year old:

I will answer this question by setting out the goals that I personally will keep trying to achieve before I die: Namely, to grow in the Christian faith by not worrying about things or problems but trusting in God to take care of my needs; To try to do what God wants me to do when I face decisions; to be a good ambassador for the Christian faith by my actions and my words. I hope to keep working on each of these "Baustellen" for as long as I live.

Asked by a 13 year old:
What should I do before I die?

Answered by a 56 year old:

Different people want to do different things in their lives. You should build on your personal strengths and follow your own dreams and ambitions. Sometimes on the way you may have to change your plans - that's life. Many people have had to find alternatives. However, there's nothing wrong in dreaming big. Good luck! On the way to your own goals support and care for others - EVERYONE - family, friends, adults, young people, children, people you are close to and people you hardly ever talk to! Together you can talk, give ideas and help each other out. Really good

ideas or opportunities may come from someone unexpected.

Asked by a 14 year old:
How was your childhood?

Answered by a 56 year old:

My childhood was very settled living with both parents in the same area from birth until I left home at 18 years. I had a very loving home and emotionally could not have asked for more. I was very close to my sister, we were always best friends. I progressed through school without academic problems. I didn't however have friends. At school I sometimes felt left out although I was never badly bullied. When I went to University I made friends quickly and from that time onwards have always been lucky enough to be surrounded by people I get on well with. I also still care very much for my family who have always been there for me.

Asked by a 14 year old:
Have you ever committed a crime?

Answered by a 60 year old:

On one occasion shortly after arriving in Germany I got fined for going through a red light in the car. It worried me hugely at the time. It was worse as it had happened in a country that I had just chosen to live in. To friends I said that I was very unlucky, and that the camera didn't give anyone enough time. Realistically I was probably driving a little too fast, was trying to get somewhere quickly, and should have stopped. It taught me a lesson and I have been more careful since!

Asked by a 15 year old:
How do you feel about your past when you were young?

Answered by a 62 year old:

I somehow would like to step back into my time as a teenager to feel the liberty and unconcern again about many things that bind me now. It would be interesting to find out whether I would take the same decisions or behave different. The time was good, but I wouldn't say it was better than now. Some things or situations in the world or society would be good to have back as they were then, others really improved over four decades.

Asked by a 12 year old:
What is your opinion on smartphones and/or the internet?

Answered by a 62 year old:

Smartphones and the internet are fantastic, and I would not want to give up the chances these technical means offer. With their help it is so easy to get in contact with others quickly or to gather information and knowledge which help me to live a better life. The risk with both smartphones and internet is to spend too much time with them and not with other people you can directly see and talk to. And, it is really quite a challenge to find a good way to handle the contents of these media. I do not want to be cheated when using new communication technologies by misinformation or data theft – quite a task to judge right from wrong and necessary from unnecessary. And it is also a big responsibility to deal correct and fair with others in our somewhat anonymous data world.

Asked by a 16 year old:
Have you ever cheated on somebody?

Answered by a 57 year old:

At first, I wanted to say No. But then one incident came to my mind. I was never good at sports when I was a school kid. So one time I was very lucky and got a best mark at Volleyball. In order to avoid that this gets spoiled by more marks definitely not good at all, I stayed away from the sports lesson as often as I could till the end of the school year. Once in a life time I had 15 points in sports in my report card.

Asked by a 14 year old:
Have you ever gotten in a fight/beaten somebody up?

Answered by a 57 year old:

In my family and in the family in which I grew up I never experienced physical violence. As kids we were not even given a slight slap or so. I never beat my own children.

But when I was a grown-up woman and wanted to help a friend get out of an abusive marriage, I experienced something frightening. I helped the friend and her little girl move out of the place she

shared with the abusive husband while we thought he was at work. He came home early and realized what we were doing. He got so angry and furious that he completely lost control. I placed myself between him and his wife and little girl. He raised his fist, I looked him in the eye, and he swung it in my direction, directing it to the wardrobe next to me in the last second. The door of the wardrobe went into pieces. None of us got hurt physically, but I will never forget what I felt when I looked at him and knew he would beat me.

Asked by a 12 year old:
How is your normal day to day life?

Answered by a 68 year old:

I have a very busy life. I am 68 years old, but fit and well. I do a lot of work in my local church; I look after my one-year-old granddaughter twice a week (12.30pm till 7.00pm each time) together with my husband; I do a weekly fitness class; I meet friends for coffee; I do weekly Spanish lessons; I look after the house, with shopping, cooking, washing, tidying, etc. I also do housework (that is, cleaning), but not as much as I probably should! I feel very blessed to be able to do all this. I don't have the energy I used to have, but I am able to relax most evenings and I like to walk, which gives me mental space. I start each day with prayer and reading the Bible and that keeps me grounded. Thanks for asking.

Asked by a 16 year old:
Have you ever felt that God isn't with you at the moment?

Answered by a 68 year old:

I have occasionally struggled feeling God's presence, but I have always known he is with me. Most of the time, I have talked to God on and off all through the day, and I think that has helped me to stay close. One of my favourite promises is Jesus saying 'I am with you always'. I believe that and almost all the time, I feel it too. I think we can do things to feel God with us: like having a special place where we pray in a more relaxed way, or a thing to hold or to look at that matters to us. I have some pictures like that and I know people who have prayer shawls to wrap round

them or places they go to feel close to God (like a lake or a garden). Whenever I see crocuses in the gardens (like now in England) I remember a very difficult time just after I had had my third baby. I had been ill and so had my two older children (!). When my parents came to see their new grandchild, I was able to go for a short walk outside on my own. The crocuses were just out – and I felt God showing me them and giving me hope that things would get better. And they did!

Asked by a 12 year old:

Is your life exciting? How do you spend your free time?

Answered by a 59 year old:

I wouldn't describe my life as 'exciting' but there are exciting moments and experiences. My life is varied in its activities, challenging to get through and interesting in that there is always something new to learn. In my free time I go swimming once a week, running twice a week, guitar lesson once a week (it used to be twice, but that was too much) and I try to practice guitar every day. I go to church once a week and wish I cooked more, perhaps I can do that once a week! I like going away to visit places and then my free time is spent exploring museums, galleries and churches – then it can be exciting!

Asked by a 13 year old:

What do you think about your life? Are you happy with what you have achieved and experienced?

Answered by a 59 year old:

I feel lucky to have been given so many opportunities in my life. I have seen massive changes since I was a boy growing up playing football on the back street – I really cannot comprehend how I have come from that to where I am now – life can be truly remarkable if you want it to be, so I am happy with the experiences I have had, good and bad, because they made me who I am and they are a part of me.

I am happy with my achievements, both individually and more particularly as a family at home or in a team at work. I guess one can always wish for more, but there is a limit to one's

capability and energy, although one can learn to improve. Achievement is only a matter of deciding what to focus on and committing time to this, whilst avoiding things that distract us. I am still working on this and in many ways, I found it easier in my teenage years!

There are some things I wish I had done differently, but they are in the past and you cannot change them: it is a waste of energy to even think about them, but one does. To come to terms with this has been difficult, even a life-long struggle for me.

Most things I feel very blessed and happy about – things turned out well, much better than I expected, and you can't get everything right all the time – we are only human after all.

Asked by a 12 year old:

Was day to day life when you were younger the same as it is today? Was it better or worse?

Answered by a 39 year old:

If I answer that 'day-to-day' life was better when I was younger, then I trust that many older generation would agree with me. To be fair to most generations, I think the technological advance really helps and accelerate certain aspect of our life. 'Day-to-day' life are bound to change from the past, to the present, and to the future.

Changes are never easy and sometimes frightening. Therefore, it's common that one generation always like the day when she/he was younger than today (or even future).

These are only few instances of differences that come to my mind: We don't carry electrical / communication device with us (i.e. phone, tablet, ipod, laptop, etc) where we could be 'somewhere else' when other people are physically around us. Sometimes I carry books or toys, and when I am reading a book or playing a toy, I also immersed myself in a 'different world'. Less number of shopping mall and big supermarket, more traditional market and shop-house. I like both ideas and hope they could co-exist until the future. Internet was not publicly available. Nowadays it's hard to find an answer without 'Mr. Google', but our parents, our teacher, books, newspapers were

our best friend for that matter. I carried my Bible and sometime hymnbook when I went for Church Sunday Service. Nowadays, Bible is available on the phone or tablet, while hymnbook's content can be found in the internet. As our life in this world is not our 'permanent home', it's more important to learn how we should live our 'day-to-day' life now and understand how / why it was like that in the past and be ready when it would be change in the future.

Asked by a 10 year old:

Do you have a good life?

Answered by a 39 year old:

The short answer is 'Yes, I have not just a good life, but great life'.

The longer answer: Two days ago, I thought about what has happened in the past week, and then in the past year, and then in the past decade. There were so many things happened where good and bad are a matter of perspective. It's not about one thing is good for one people, but bad for other people. Rather, it's more like I thought it's bad, but then it happened that way so that I am now in my current situation.

Not long, I have another thought in my mind, what happened if my 'today' self has a time-travel visit to my '5 years ago' self. Would it be an exciting moment for my '5 years ago' self to know what is happening today (i.e. 5 years later from the other perspective)? Or, perhaps would it be an even better idea that when I will time-travel to my 'past' self when I was having the very hard time in my life, or when I was very down and hopeless, or when I was alone and my closest friend neglected me? Would that bring my optimism to my entire 'past' self where I would understand more when people said 'there is always a meaning for every incident in our life'?

Neither I have the ability to time-travel, nor I would really recommend to time-travel when human has the ability to do so. The reality is life has never been a constant good life or a constant bad life. At certain time, there is a very long period of "good life" and also there is a very long period of "bad life". Humans, including me myself, do not always have patience and in many

time we gave up our hope before the we see the end of that very long period of "bad life". Wouldn't you want to endure one more minute, or one more day, or one more year, or even one more decade, if you know by then you would see the end of what you thought as a 'bad life' and when the 'good life' is happening soon.

Lastly, are we really limited by our definition of good life or bad life? In certain case, yes, you might be restricted (i.e. in prison, in traumatic family experience, etc). Nevertheless, there is one thing that other people can't take from us: the ability to choose how we want to react, and how our perspective to the situation around us. When we are blessed with more freedom to act and to change our situation, then why not taking the chance to change?

Having reflected these, I personally think it's better that:

- 1. For every good life we experience, keep thankful and share your blessing with other. Remember that not everyone experience the same situation as we are.*
- 2. For every bad life we experience, do not lose hope and take action to change, when possible.*

Note: I hope my 'future-self' do not visit me, and try to prevent me sending this answer to Nico by backing into my e-mail and change my password.

