

## One Church Penrith Prayer Retreat 2026 – The Youth In Our City

### Restoring Kings

by Allyson Parker

Close your eyes for just a moment and picture in your head your community- not the landscape, but the people. Now expand your picture to the world

every culture

every socio-economic group.

God's people- people who do not even know that this is who they are.

Just for a moment try to see what God sees.

What did you see? What did you imagine? What was the age of the people in your community? I want you to honestly consider your immediate image.

Because if you only saw adults, you didn't see what God sees at all because he sees millions of children and young people.

If we are to see our community as God does, we must begin to **see** children. We must begin to **see** the generations. We must see what God sees- not the world through our lense, but through his.

The great DL Moody was having lunch with a friend after a Sunday service. He told him that 'one and half people got saved today- a man and a child.' His friend smiled knowingly, "I understand. The man was the one and the child the half."

DL Moddy responded, "You are so wrong. The child was the one and the man the half. A child has their whole life to give to Jesus, the man has already wasted half of his."

Not only must we see generations, but perhaps our perspective about them must change.

**Generation Alpha are defined as those born from 2010-2024.** More than 2.8 million are born globally every week. When they have all been born (2025) they will number almost 2 billion – the largest generation in the history of the world.

Dr Wes Stafford, who was CEO of Compassion said this:

*“Formed in the image of Almighty God, a child already has gifts to bring to the world. What happens in the next moments, hours, days and years will determine whether this God-given potential will be realized or lost to us all.”*

**What happens is up to us. And every moment, hour, day and year matters.**

At 9:00am on Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup> 2022, I took a class of kindergarten students for their first SRE lesson at a school locally. 9 out of 78 little people sat before me expectantly. I asked if anyone knew what we would be learning about in scripture. No-one did. So I said, ‘We’re going to learn about God in scripture.’ Immediately, one of the students asked, ‘What’s God?’

Not even, “Who’s God?”

None of her peers could tell her. I wept for 3 days.

### **Psalm 78: 1-7 New International Reader's Version**

<sup>1</sup> My people, listen to my teaching.

Pay attention to what I say.

<sup>2</sup> I will open my mouth and tell a story.

I will speak about things that were hidden.

They happened a long time ago.

<sup>3</sup> We have heard about them and we know them.

Our people who lived before us have told us about them.

<sup>4</sup> We won't hide them from our children.

We will tell them to those who live after us.

We will tell them what the LORD has done that is worthy of praise.

We will talk about his power and the wonderful things he has done.

<sup>5</sup> He gave laws to the people of Jacob.

He gave Israel their law.

He commanded our people who lived before us

to teach his laws to their children.

<sup>6</sup> Then those born later would know his laws.

Even their children yet to come would know them.

And they in turn would tell their children.

<sup>7</sup> Then they would put their trust in God.

They would not forget what he had done.

They would obey his commands.

For thousands of years this has been in our Bibles.....

So HOW WAS THIS HER QUESTION? Not why was this her question? But HOW was this her question?

**What happens is up to us. Not just me. Not just your children's and youth team.**

**It's up to us as parents, as leaders, as followers of Christ. But as pastors, and senior leaders, how much more is it up to us?**

**Because if we won't tell our children, who do we expect will?**

Turn with me to 2 Kings 11

## **2 Kings 11: 1-3**

**1-3** Athaliah was the mother of Ahaziah. When she saw that her son was dead, she took over. She began by massacring the entire royal family. But Jehosheba, daughter of King Joram and sister of Ahaziah, took Ahaziah's son Joash and kidnapped him from among the king's sons slated for slaughter. She hid him and his nurse in a private room away from Athaliah. He didn't get killed. He was there with her, hidden away for six years in The Temple of God. Athaliah, oblivious to his existence, ruled the country.

This woman set out to destroy a generation to fulfill her own agenda. The opportunity presented to her was to raise a generation and lead them to fulfill the purpose of their lives, but she, instead, set out to kill them for her own personal gain. Across the world this morning, the enemy is again killing a generation to fulfill his own agenda. He's using men, women, governments, militant groups and whole nations to seek their own personal gain at the cost of children's lives.

We see children exploited globally. They are trafficked for financial gain and sexual gratification. Australia is the third highest nation consuming online sexual exploitation of children from the Philippines and the 'tourism' industry in Thailand thrives based on Australian dollars. Children are recruited as child soldiers, and forced into labour markets due to poverty.

Our nation has a crisis of domestic abuse, alongside significant problems with addiction issues. The regional districts surrounding us to the north and west make up the top 20 highest areas of domestic violence and alcohol related violence in our state. The impact of this upon children and young people is profound and recognized in our mandatory reporting legislation.

For 1 in 3 girls, and 1 in 5 boys it remains that home and bed are not safe places, and we are yet to see the full impact of what young people, particularly young men are watching online, and carrying into relationships, but it has already forced a change to consent laws in NSW and we have had glimpses of its impact in our news feeds in the past two weeks.

We are seeing children and young people profoundly affected by rising levels of anxiety and mental health issues, loneliness and identity confusion.

Across churches, youth groups, kids' clubs and small groups in this nation, children have been- and continue to be- groomed and abused by those who say they represent Jesus.

But perhaps the greatest harm to our generations is found in the radical secularization of our culture which openly and aggressively opposes Christian faith and values and catechizes the thinking and language of our worldview. It has profound eternal consequences.

The enemy has a clear agenda to kill, steal and destroy.

So where does this leave us? Is this a 'them/ the world/ not our fault/ satan' problem only?

Because this is the census data for NSW in 2021:

In 2021, the main religious affiliation in NSW was Christianity (**47.6%**). This proportion has decreased over time as people reporting non-Christian religions and no religious affiliation have increased. In 2016, Christian affiliation was **55.2%**, and in **1971 it was 88.4%**.

The percentage of people who identified as having no religious affiliation was **33.2% in 2021. This was an increase from 25.5% in 2016, and 5.5% in 1971.**

With trembling, am I willing to ask myself- and us tonight, “Have we allowed the destruction of generations, while we’ve had position and power within our churches?”

Why have our generations left the church literally by the millions? What have we not done, and what are we not doing to bring them back? AND, what are we so comfortable with and unwilling to change that the pattern of 50% of all young people who grow up in church no longer continuing with faith in their adulthood continues?

I may have been a baby in 1971, but I was a pastor in 2016- and in 2021, so the percentage change in this season is on my watch and I’ll either say, “oh but.... Or “Oh God”

**Church, pastors, will we be those who rescue generations from the hand of the enemy?**

The figures can be overwhelming. And I don’t pretend I have all the answers or strategies needed. The reality is that Jehosheba couldn’t rescue all the all the king’s sons. But I believe she had faith filled generational sight- not only for Joash, but for her nation, and she believed that within this child, with the discipleship of Jehoiada, was the transformation from idolatry to restoration of worship for thousands. In rescuing this child, she surrendered her position, and lay down her life to be with him. She could have hidden Joash in any number of places- but she chose the Temple, in the care of the senior leader, and he guarded him, protected him, and personally invested into him.

Do we SEE generations or will we continue to purely lament generations?

Do we actively and deliberately rescue generations because we see with faith all that is within them?

Are there kings in your children’s and youth ministry?

What will we lay down for our children now and the generations to follow?

**We must begin by being those who will recognize the worth of each one and fight for them. We must stand between them and the enemy.**

## 2 Kings 11: 5-11

Then he commanded them, "These are your instructions: Those of you who come on duty on the Sabbath and guard the palace, and those of you who go off duty on the Sabbath and guard The Temple of God, are to join forces at the time of the changing of the guard and form a ring around the young king, weapons at the ready. Kill anyone who tries to break through your ranks. Your job is to stay with the king at all times and places, coming and going."

The captains obeyed the orders of Jehoiada the priest. Each took his men, those who came on duty on the Sabbath and those who went off duty on the Sabbath, and presented them to Jehoiada the priest. The priest armed the officers with spears and shields originally belonging to King David, stored in The Temple of God. Well-armed, the guards took up their assigned positions for protecting the king, from one end of The Temple to the other, surrounding both Altar and Temple.

The priest presented Joash- this little boy- to the army as their king and commanded them to protect him- if necessary with their lives. They were to kill anyone who tried to break through their ranks of protection. They took up their assigned positions from one end of the temple to the other. They believed in who this child was and who he was called to be. They acted upon the value they placed upon the child.

We won't fight for what we don't value- what we don't believe in. It's why children are exploited the world over. I don't think any of us here would ever say or consciously think or believe that children are not valuable, however these are some of the words said directly to me by men and women of God while in my role as children's pastor, or in my role as Generations pastor and ACC kids director for NSW:

*"Don't worry dear, we all have to start somewhere."*

*"Are you still doing kids ministry?"*

*"I can't talk to my grandchildren about God, because I'll upset my son."*

*"My budget for children's ministry is \$100 for the year."*

*"No-one wants to be on the team because they'll miss out on the service."*

*"My pastor wouldn't know what happens in the kids church."*

*"We need a kids' program so the adults can receive without being interrupted."*

*"Young people scare me."*

*"That's youth...." (eye roll included)*

### Demonstration- shields and swords

*"I've done my time"*

*"I've moved up"*

*"It's not my thing"*

*"I don't have time"*

*"you've got to be kidding"*

On duty, off duty- called or not to children or youth ministry- an army took up their weapons to protect the coming generation. They surrounded him, fought for him and worked together. THEY DID NOT ABANDON HIM to the enemy.

For Joash, the temple was a place of safety, nurture and growth. Here he found a culture of protection and significance. All who were within the temple were charged with the responsibility to protect. It is the same with us today. We set the culture to guard our generations from the weapons formed against them.

**Men-** this one weapon of warfare against our children has stolen from them men of God to raise them in the things of God. Believe me, this is a deliberate strategy of Satan to destroy our generations. How do our boys and young men know how to passionately follow Christ as a man? How do they learn to harness the warrior spirit within them? We leave our children to women- and there are some mighty ones among them- but they lose the father heart; they don't experience either teaching or, if needed, healing from men who are holy, safe, strong, wise and self controlled. We then take our young men, who have not experienced holy male leadership and wisdom, and ask them to lead our youth, while they, themselves struggle with porn, what it means to be a man of God or how to father generations.

Men, please, see the victory the enemy has won and the spirit of fear he has released, and for the sake of our children and young people, take your place to disciple them.

This mighty temple army picked up the weapons of the temple- and surely we have some of those too. Do we not have shields of faith? Do we not have a sword of the Spirit. Are we not called to be soldiers of Christ, armed for warfare? Can we not surround this generation with prayer? Will we not be with them to guard them- in our homes, our churches, in our schools, in our extended families, in our community at large? At what point has it been ok for us to go off-duty to the point that we now find we have a generation asking 'What's God?'

Let me present to you the sons and daughters of the King of all kings- the children of God

They come in all colours, all cultures and from all nations. They come clean and dirty, educated and unable to read or write. They are small- and large. They come tattooed and pierced. They come attached to technology but unable to hold a conversation. They come weak and with bravado. They come meek and highly opinionated. They come with all sorts of lies and brokenness within their hearts and lives. But as children of Almighty God, they deserve to know who He is and who they really are.

They deserve to be raised as children of God- holy, set-apart, filled with the fruit of the Spirit, the truth of the Word and the power and purpose of God.

We are called to be the army that understands the value of each child and acts upon it; to stand together and not allow the enemy to break our ranks- whether we are coming on duty or going off. We are called to surround a generation with the protection we can offer and fight for their lives using all the resources we have available to do so.

**Finally, we need to be those who will raise our generations up to be all they can be for God.**

**2 Kings 11: 12, 19-21**