

# THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FIRST AND SECOND GENERATION CHRISTIANS

In the church we have two somewhat different groups of members who we call first and second generation christians.

By definition, first generation christians are those of us who were called out from the world into the church. Second generation christians, on the other hand, are those who were raised up in the church by parents who themselves came into the church from the world.

In this article I would like to look at the differences between these groups and look at what we can learn from the differences between first and second generation christians.

It's also important to remember as we look at this topic that there are several variations to this grouping of members in the church. Some of those variations include -:

- Third and even fourth generation members (Like second generation members they have grown up always knowing the true teachings of the Bible).
- Those whose parents came into the church when they were in their teenage years or even older and they spent little of their childhood being raised in the church. (Most of those who fall into this category, from my experience, tend to have a calling and an enthusiasm much like that of first generation christians)
- Those who were raised in the church but left around the time they were teenagers only to come back to the church much later after they saw the world for what it really was. (We have had many prodigal sons and daughters return to the church over the years)
- Those who were raised up in the church but had their own first love experience, like those of first generation christians, when they had to prove all the doctrines of the church for themselves during the apostasy of our former association.

So what are some of the differences between first and second generation christians?

- 1) First generation christians tend to have a dramatic calling and they see the teachings of the church as new, shocking and exciting. I know that is how I felt when God initially called me and opened my mind to the truth. Often God has softened them up first in the leadup to their calling with certain trials and then opened their eyes to the many teachings of the Bible in a dramatic way.

For those raised in the church there is no shock and those of us who came out of the world should understand why there's no shock. It's impossible to find it shocking when you've known it all your life. As a result of that there can be more of a tendency for second generation members to take the truth for granted and not value it for what it really is.

- 2) First generation christians tend to more clearly see the opportunity as a pearl of great price. They see a stark black and white contrast between what the world offers and the church teaches and they jump at it. First generation christians have what we call a new love.

To second generation christians it's not a new love but it should, in time, be a first love. To give up work and sport on Saturdays and all the other things tends to be easier for first generation christians because they're usually older and on a spiritual high whereas second generation christians are usually younger and parents need to help them through those kind of sacrifices in a positive way.

- 3) First generation members often tend to have a strong urgency for the Kingdom of God to come as soon as possible. Many young people who've grown up in the church in our rich western nations have a good and comfortable life along with the many opportunities and advantages they have in the church. Now because of that it can be much harder sometimes for them to have much of an urgency for wanting God's kingdom to come.

It's good for those who have grown up in the church to watch and read about how badly so many people have it in the third world as well as how tragic life can be for so many people in our western nations today so they can feel and see how badly this world needs God's kingdom.

Now that we've looked at those three main differences let's look a little bit at the way that God opens our minds and works with us.

Over in **Revelation 17:14** we read the following: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are [notice these words called, and chosen, and faithful." We know what faithful means in this passage – to be faithful to God's ways to the end or when Christ returns but what do we mean by someone being called and chosen?

Does being called mean the same thing as being chosen by God? We can find the answer to that question over in **Matthew 20:16** where we read, "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many are called, but few chosen."

It says the many are called not the few and only a few are chosen. So we see that being called by God is something completely different from being chosen.

**A calling is an initial invitation which is what happens with everyone who hears the Truth, regardless of how they respond. The second part of the process of being chosen means being chosen by God. It is neither something that we do nor is it one and the same as being called as we just saw.**

**As best as I can surmise the calling is that initial invitation to all our young people in the church from God where they hear and learn about the Truth. It's then up to those who are called to respond to that calling at their own pace and if they respond enough then God chooses them and gives them a much fuller understanding of His truth.**

If you have been raised up in the church what things can you do to deepen your conversion and know that you're ready to be baptized?

First of all, you need to prove the doctrines of the church and not just assume they are correct. Second generation members need to believe the doctrines and keep God's laws because they've proven them right and not just accept them because their parents believe them.

**How can you tell whether you are merely accepting the doctrines of the church and God's way of life because your parents believe them or because you believe in them? Well, I would ask you a simple question, "Is what you believe a conviction or is it merely a preference?"**

A conviction is a belief or a standard of behaviour that you will hold to no matter what. A preference, on the other hand, is merely something you prefer to do that you might give up under pressure or change under different circumstances.

You can ask yourself if all your family and best friends left the church would you stay and hold onto the doctrines of the church and still live by God's way of life? Many young people of my generation got baptized because it was the thing to do or because it was expected of them. When the trials of life came later on and when the church changed its teachings they gave up the truth and God's way of life simply because it was a preference and not a conviction. How about you? Would you do the same thing under those circumstances or are you truly convicted of God's way no matter what happens?

**If God's way of life and the teachings of the church are something that you are committed to, no matter what, then you do have the repentance required for baptism no matter how you feel. Attitudes of the heart and the Holy Spirit are spiritual and not something that you can feel so don't get hung up on waiting for a dramatic calling accompanied by great feelings.**

Only when you receive God's spirit at baptism are you officially eligible for the first resurrection by having God's spirit in you and not just working with you. This difference between the spirit working with someone and the spirit being in someone is noted in reference to the apostles before and after Christ's crucifixion over in **John 14:17**.

If you want to deepen your feelings and appreciation for God's truth then remember contrast is a big key. For those of us who were called into the church many of us know deeply what it's like to live without the hope of God's kingdom and many of us have had first-hand experience at how awful life can be not knowing or living by God's way. Our appreciation comes from the great contrast of knowing what life is like without it.

There is no need if you've grown up in the church to leave the church for a while to prove God's way is right. In **Proverbs 1:20** we read that "Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open squares." It says that wisdom cries aloud in the streets. There's enough evidence in the messed up lives of people in the world, including unconverted friends and family, to prove God's way is right and the world's way only brings pain.

If you do leave the church and come back later you will still have to wear the consequences of living by the world's ways. It's far better to learn second-hand from friends and family in the

world as well as people you read about in the media just how bad life can be without living by God's way than to experience it first-hand. You'll spare yourself quite a lot of scars and regrets if you do.

Another point to deepen your conversion if you are a second generation christian is to get to know people older than you, from those in their 20's and 30's right up to our senior members. In **Proverbs 13:20** it says, "He that walks with wise men shall be wise." My own observation over the years is that the maturity of young people is often directly proportional to the time they spend getting to know people older than them. Those who spend virtually all their time with their peers tend to be more shallow and less mature.

I would encourage parents to encourage their kids to get to know people of all ages in the church, not just their immediate peers but also those in their 20's, 30's and older and those of you who are young, if you spend time getting to know those older than you, little by little, you'll actually be quite surprised at just how enjoyable and helpful those friendships can be.

In **2 Timothy 1:5**, the Apostle Paul wrote the following to the evangelist Timothy, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that is in you also." We see here that Timothy was himself not a second but a third generation christian having both a mother and a grandmother in the church.

In conclusion, the calling for those who have grown up in the church may not be so dramatic as someone who is a first generation christian but it can and should be just as profound. When I think about that point it brings to mind a couple of very good friends of mine who are two of the most passionate people for the Truth of God that I know and yet they both grew up in the church.

Those of us who came out of the world should appreciate the calling of second generation christians and those brought up in the church should comprehend, appreciate and really take a hold of the amazing opportunity that God is offering them to be a part of His firstfruits that will rule and transform this world after Jesus returns to rule all nations.