

# GOD OF GENERATIONS

REV DAVID W BAER  
PRESIDENT & CEO FAMILIESALIVE®

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When the angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she is to give birth to the Messiah, her heart is so filled with joy that she breaks into the first Christmas doxology. Her praise to God is punctuated with references to God’s mighty deeds performed on behalf of his people down through the ages. Luke 1:50 summarizes her song: “His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.” Because it summarizes our philosophy of ministry, FamiliesAlive® has chosen this as our theme verse.

Mary’s attitude is in marked contrast to a young couple Ruth and I knew in our first pastorate. After their marriage, they announced that they weren’t going to have children. When I asked why, they replied, “The world is too awful to bring children into it.”

It seems to me, if your vision is focused on the world, it is a scary thing to bring children into it. But Mary’s focus is on the God who promises great blessings for his people and their children. She recognized that the Lord had always been the strength and provision for his people and her confidence was that he would continue to help his chosen ones.

The coming child of promise would bring a new age of God’s grace that would be for all of his people. While researching for her message to Asian women in Kazakhstan, *Praying For Your Children*, Ruth found a lot of material on the subject of generational curses. To be sure, God’s covenant comes with this warning: “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me...” But wait! The passage continues “...but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

The exaggerated difference between a thousand generations and three or four shows us how great is God’s covenant love. If anything is emphasized here, it is not generational cursing but generational blessing.

And that’s what Ruth found surprising in her studies — she found that many writers on family themes focus on generational curses but ignore what Scripture says about God’s generational blessings. In Jeremiah 31:29-30 and Ezekiel 18:12, the Word of God indicates that a new time was coming when the old idea of generational cursing would pass away. “In those days people will no longer say, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’” (Jer. 31:29) Hasn’t the coming of Christ brought fulfillment to the prophetic word of Ezekiel and Jeremiah?

This is our passion: to share the good news that brings hope to families — the good news of God’s generational blessings through Christ. Together, let’s keep our focus on the great grace of our Lord. Our hope and confidence is based upon his promises. Like Mary, we can look back in history and see how God has always been the strength of his

people — His providence has always been remarkable. That gives us hope and confidence for the family and for the future. “His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.”