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PASSING THE BATON

Key Scripture: Acts 13:36

A relay race is run by a team of four runners. The first runner carries a baton. After running a specified distance, called a "leg" the runner hands the baton to the next team member. The exchange must occur within a zone a few meters long. Timing is crucial. If the runners do not exchange the baton within this zone, the team is disqualified. The length of the race varies from four hundred to six thousand meters. In some relays each team member runs an equal distance, but in others run different distances.

The relay race is not necessarily won by the team that runs the fastest, but by successfully passing the baton in the exchange zone. That's right; races are won or lost in the passing of the baton. Teams can be disqualified by a bad pass. Passing the baton is essential to win the race.

A lesson to be learned throughout the Bible is the importance of passing the baton from one generation to another.

This is clearly seen (to give a few examples) in Moses passing the baton to Joshua, David to Solomon, Elijah to Elisha, Jesus to His disciples, and Paul to Timothy.

It is not enough to run the race. We also pass our mission to the next generation. We must hand off the baton, at the right time, and must do it well. Jesus handed the baton to His disciples. They ran a good race and passed the baton to the next generation. Timothy received the baton from Paul, and was instructed to pass it on to others (2 Timothy 2:2).

Dale Burke in *Less is More Leadership* said, "Nothing feels better than seeing a vision that you helped birth be passed on into the capable hands of others." As a leader you must be willing to let go.

Let us look closely at a man that successfully passed a baton to the next generation. This is the Old Testament story of King David and Solomon.

DREAM

David had a dream to build a house for the Lord. Despite his good intentions, ample preparations, it remained an unfulfilled dream. See 1 Chronicles 28:2.

DESTINY

David passed the baton to Solomon. David's dream became Solomon's destiny. See 1 Chronicles 28:9-10. All that David had without Solomon was a dream.

DESIGN

God provides the design for our vision. David without Solomon was a dream. Solomon without David was a destiny unfulfilled. See 1 Chronicles 28:11-12. David had the dream. Solomon had the destiny. Both were committed to God's design.

Daniel Deck provided the seed thoughts for this lesson. In his sermon "Generation to Generation" he said, "When the younger full of strength and energy joins forces with the elder full of experience and wisdom the results can be powerful and long-term." No generation stands independent of its predecessors or those that follow. Generations overlap. Each generation is equipped with men and women created for that generation. Every generation stands on the shoulders of those that went on before. We build, not destroy, the foundation that is laid for us. The church's success is determined by its ability to survive and excel from generation to generation.

This takes us away from our relay race comparison but have you ever noticed farmers in the field? Daniel Deck

explains that the success of their harvest is vital to survival. When it is time to plant or harvest everyone is involved. Sometimes school is even dismissed and the field becomes the focus of everyone. It is not uncommon to see three generations working in the field together, side-by-side, because success, survival, and the season demands it. Generations should learn how to run together; work together; know when to receive the baton, and how to continue the race.

Many times the mission, vision, purpose, or plan of God outlives a person. To see it fulfilled it must be successfully passed to the next generation. We often think of generations in terms of age but it could mean much more than this. Instead of experiencing generational friction and misunderstanding we need to strive for unity and continuity. We have strength in our diversity. We run the race together, as a team, and pass the baton from one to another.

David's lifelong dream and heart's desire became Solomon's intense passion. See 1 Kings 5:5, and 8:17. The temple took seven years to build, was a wonder of the world, and was built according to David's dream and God's design. God has planted a piece of eternity in the hearts of men. We do our part and then successfully pass the baton to the next generation. Thus, we keep the mission alive, and the church marches on!