

# RISING GENERATIONS

## THE UPPER ROOM

### Being Real

Our society seems more divided than ever. We see this in our relationships, in politics, and even within the church. When we can't find commonality, many of us tend to avoid or even reject the people with whom we disagree. But these rifts can affect our personal relationships and our ability to share the Gospel. How can we reach those whom we dismiss?

We all are broken, imperfect people. We can't do life alone. We need community—with one another and with God. So how can we move beyond our disagreements to focus on loving others, loving God, and offering to all our unique skills, abilities, and personalities?

—Aly Mitchell, 23

### Be Yourself

To be genuine means to be authentic, honest, real, true. But being genuine in a relationship or even in a conversation can be difficult. We want other people to like us and respect us, so we're tempted to present ourselves as somehow "better" than we think we are.

Everyone has room for improvement, but trying to be what we think others consider perfect is a recipe for disaster. *Get real!*—this common expression is good advice. Being who we already are has to be easier than being someone we're not.

—Mike Gadell

### Be Willing to Learn

I love to debate. I enjoy gaining insight into other people's thoughts and opinions. Even if I think a person's stance is unreasonable, I ask sincere and honest questions. We may not change each other's minds, but we can learn from each other.

If we can't debate amicably, I agree to disagree and thank him or her for offering me another perspective. These discussions are not about who is right or wrong. Instead, I see the conversation as a chance to learn something I might have missed and to discover how other people's experiences shape their way of thinking.

—Sarah Klauda

### Be Patient, Listening in Love

Recently, we were debating a controversial topic in one of my classes. If this had happened a year ago, I would have been quick to interrupt and make my point. But this time I allowed other students to speak. I listened to their opinions, then offered mine.

I have struggled with being patient. But patience is important in a debate, argument, or confrontation. Instead of simply disagreeing, I am learning to ask questions that encourage further conversation: “Can you help me understand what you are saying?” “Can you tell me why you believe that?” “Can you explain the evidence you have to support that idea?”

If we listen with love and patience, even when we disagree, other people may be more open to hearing and understanding our opinions as well.

—Victoria Betrous, 16

## Be Like Christ

When I face conflict, I look to Jesus as my example of love, kindness, and patience. “Love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law” (Romans 13:8, NIV). If we put love first as Jesus does, then we won’t be focused on who is right or wrong but on how we can show others the love of Christ.

Pray: Lord, please help me to love people as you do. Especially in times of disagreement, fill me with your spirit of love. Amen.

—Coby Shelton, 20

## Dig Deeper

I turn to Galatians 5:22–23 as a guide for my conversations. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are all fruit of the Spirit that we can cultivate. If we keep them in mind in all our conversations, we listen as well as talk. We don’t unnecessarily raise subjects that will embarrass; but in the right context, we don’t dodge important topics. We’re gentle when we talk. We tolerate other opinions.

Jesus talked calmly and assuredly about sex, politics, religion, and death. Although he sometimes upset people, he didn’t shirk from the topic at hand and he always treated people with respect.

May God help us to practice employing the fruit of the Spirit in all of our conversations.

—Richard Lawton