

INTRO

The term “sandwich generation” has nothing to do with bread and lunch ingredients. But it does have to do with being situated [covered, supported, compressed, overshadowed, grilled, toasted?] between two big entities.

It turns out that tens of millions of Americans – and over half of those in their 40’s – find themselves “sandwiched” between their aging parents, and their own children. As your own experience may or may not reveal, there’s a lot that goes into being a member of this age group, demographic, and/or life stage. While managing one’s own household, children’s schedules, or navigating a newly empty nest, the sandwich generation can suddenly find themselves being called on for questions and care they didn’t know they’d be asked, regarding their own parents. It’s busy, and stressful.

And yet, as one of the below resources show (Pew Research), those who experience the “sandwiching” tend to rate their family life as more satisfying than those not caught caring between generations. Why?

This Brewed Theology topic will explore the challenges and gifts of being the sandwich generation, whether or not you are personally a part of that label. The Crafted Conversation begins simply by asking participants to identify their own place in a “sandwich.” It then moves through some scripture, asks questions about tending to relationships and oneself, before moving into what our faith might have to say about the whole thing.

While Biblical examples of modern multi-generational households are non-existent, scripture does have words about abundant life in community, and staying sane selves in the midst of it all. Chat about where you find yourself, and where the Holy Spirit may be found in whatever hoagie, melt, sub, or sandwich you got.

Stuck in the Middle with You: **SANDWICH** **GENERATION** Caring for Kids & Parents

**a Brewed Theology
conversation starter***

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Where is your place in a “sandwich” generation model? Are you in the middle? A child? A parent? Is the model different for you, somehow? (e.g., grandparents caring for children, etc.?) What sort of family systems have you inherited? What are some models or examples of multi-generational households or families? How is dignity and care for all maintained, when attention can be demanded by many directions? How might faith communities function as a “sandwich,” and who is who in them? How much of your time do you spend tending to others? How many “hats” do you wear, regarding close relationships? How are your stress levels? What are you doing to take care of yourself?

BIBLE BASICS

Read these passages from scripture, about scripture. Reflect on your (or another’s!) experience as sandwich generation.

- **Deuteronomy 5:16** – Honor your father and mother. (Also in Exodus 20.) What goes along with this command?
- **Mark 3:31-35** – Jesus redefines family here. And does **again from the cross in John**. What do you notice here?
- **Matthew 14:22-27** – Jesus ministers, leaves to be alone and pray, and then rescues his disciples in a storm.
- **Luke 5:17-26** – As Jesus is teaching, some guys lower a friend of theirs through the roof on a mat.
- **Revelation 1:4-7** – The scope of God’s reign, and who Jesus is, encompasses all things, “alpha and omega.”

ESSENTIAL READINGS and LISTENINGS

WHAT IS THE SANDWICH GENERATION? (6 min video; AND/OR an 8 minute alternative here)

Hear a definition and overview from two women who are living sandwich generation life. Robyn Frank and Eliesa Johnson discuss “[The Sandwich Generation Pod](#)” in this local news interview. *(Disclaimer: we at Brewed Theology have not reviewed all of their podcast material, but the content is pertinent. Be aware that some of their language is salty, but their [resource page is extensive!](#) Peruse as you find it helpful.)*

SANDWICH GENERATION: DEFINITIONS & DATA

This *Pew Research Center* article offers some definitions and data, with the title, “More than half of Americans in their 40s are sandwiched between aging parent and their own children.” Read through some data, charts, and find where you (and/or your kids, peers, and parents) might be.

MANAGING SANDWICH GENERATION STRESS

CaringBridge is best known as a platform for caregivers to offer updates in times of a loved one’s health crisis, and to receive support in return. In this caregiving advice article, they offer “6 Useful Tips” for sandwich generation stress: support systems, prioritizing tasks, and self-care, among others.

EMOTIONAL TOLL OF CAREGIVING

This short article from *Psychology Today* names the emotional toll of being sandwich generation – particularly (though not exclusively) on women. Read and reflect on your own assumptions or experience. Also: the author uses the term “parentification,” which is when children assume parenting roles. Read [some definitions here](#).

WEARING CAPES, JUGGLING THINGS, AND WINNING? (10 min video)

Speaker, entrepreneur, and athlete Lanaire Malone discusses “The art of winning in the sandwich generation.” Malone describes her own experience of grief, loss, burnout, and letting go in this TEDx talk. Note especially her descriptions of all the “capes” sandwichers wear, and the balls they juggle, and how to let things drop in order to make life happen. And then ask, “Is that possible? Doable? Necessary?”

BURDENS AND BALANCE (15 min video)

Coach and TEDx presenter Isabel Vallejo Echavarria begins this talk recounting that her two children were discussing “what to do with her” when she got older (she was 57 at the time). Echavarria adds another perspective from the “top” of the sandwich about open conversation, dignity, and not being “a burden.”

HOW CAN THE CHURCH HELP?

Katrina Tatum asks, writing for *Ministry Architects*, “How often do we, the church, speak specifically to *this* unique life stage?” Noting common church programs for kids 0-18 years of age, and for elderly adults, she asks, “what about those who are in between the far ends of the age spectrum?” Consider those questions as you read.

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