

Millennials and The Gospel

Ministering to a *Discontinuously Different* Generation

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Do we have a problem?

Across our country, the general impression appears to be that Christianity is on the decline. Is membership waning? Is the median age of worshippers increasing? These are different questions, but related. Even if membership numbers remain static, a church (or church body) could be aging in such a way that spells disaster for the next generation. Do we have a problem?

It's fairly common knowledge that mainline Protestant churches have been bleeding slow deaths for the past forty years.¹ But independent scholar, Diana Butler Bass, who has written extensively on culture and religion, also suggests:

“Churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church, and the conservative Presbyterian Church in America are reporting losses that resemble declines their mainline counterparts suffered in the 1970s. New megachurches spring up and are successful for a time – until they are forced to close down and sell their buildings. Even the Catholic Church has barely maintained its share of the population, mostly because immigrant Catholics offset the massive loss of U.S. born members.”²

Furthermore, numerous studies seem to suggest that Americans drastically overreport their church attendance when polled. Researcher Philip Brenner from the University of Michigan says that Americans generally overreport church attendance by 10 to 18 points. On the basis of actual behavior, Brenner found church attendance for the past decade to be around 24 percent of the general populace (weekly) and falling, considerably lower than the 1970s.³ Likewise, sociologists Kirk Hadaway and P.L. Marler, authors of *Did You Really Go To Church?*, after carefully tracking denominational church attendance statistics for years, have suggested that from 1961 to 1996, actual church attendance fell by half, despite the fact that self-reported attendance has remained the same.⁴

Whatever statistics one takes, the trends are the same. Church attendance is becoming less common, especially amongst young adults.⁵ The current numbers indicate that two out of every five adults in the United States attends church at least monthly. Keep in mind, however, how this contrasts with the self-identifying of adults, i.e. two out of five is probably overreporting. Still, nearly eight out of ten adults in the country consider themselves “Christian.”⁶ In other words, twice as many people call themselves “Christian” as attend church on any given month. For half of Americans then, involvement in regular church activity has ceased to be part of the definition of Christianity.

¹ ARIS, “American Nones: The Profile of the No Religion Population,” Trinity College, http://commons.trincoll.edu/aris/files/2011/08/NONES_08.pdf

² Diana Butler Bass. *Christianity After Religion*, pgs. 19-20

³ Philip S. Brenner, “Exceptional Behavior or Exceptional Identity? Overreporting of Church Attendance in the U.S.,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (spring 2011).

⁴ Bass, pg. 54

⁵ Interestingly, this is a uniquely American issue. Global affiliation with churches and worship attendance are actually on the rise, most significantly in Africa, China, and South Korea. James Emory White, *Rise of the Nones*, pg. 18.

⁶ David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, pg. 50

Whatever current numbers are discovered regarding Christian participation in the country, the data is consistently always worse for young adults than it is for adults in general. For instance, only 35 percent of adults in their twenties and thirties currently attend church...ever. Only one out of five of these young adults ever engages in Bible Study.⁷ And even among those who do participate, orthodoxy – faithfulness to even basic Apostles’ Creed truths – is sparse. Some recent research has even indicated that only about three percent of those born between 1960 and 2000 fully believe basic biblical concepts, e.g. God as an all-knowing Creator, the Bible as fully authoritative in unchanging moral truth, salvation coming as a gift through the perfect God-man, Jesus.⁸

Somewhat paradoxically, but not surprisingly then, our country has a generation of “Christians” who have little to no conviction about Christianity. They are not necessarily antagonistic against religion, but they simply see faith as unimportant and irrelevant. They just don’t care about faith much. In fact, amongst self-described Christian young adults, only 18 percent say their faith is important to them.⁹

The next natural sociological domino to fall would be Americans who even self-identify as Christian. Since 1960, the number of Americans claiming “emphatic” belief in God has gone from 97 percent to 71 percent, a 26-point drop. Young adults today feel significantly less obligation to religion than their grandparents. Consequently, somewhere between 25 and 30 percent of adults under thirty today claim none.¹⁰ A fifth of all adults and a third of young adults are now commonly referred to by researchers as “nones” (i.e. not religiously affiliated).¹¹

All of this has led some of the more influential Christian voices in America, like noted Southern Baptist, Al Mohler, to conclude:

“A remarkable culture-shift has taken place around us. The most basic contours of American culture have been radically altered....Clearly, there is a new narrative, a post-Christian narrative, that is animating large portions of this society.”¹²

Today, our country appears to possess a largely nominal, cultural Christianity, a haunting remnant of what was. The evidence, from declining numbers to altered beliefs to self-attested disinterest, all undeniably points to Christianity’s fading presence in the country. If we as a nation are indeed “post-Christian” ...then yes, clearly, we have a problem. Denial only prevents us from addressing the issue.

⁷ Thom Rainer, *Millennials*, pg. 47

⁸ Gabe Lyons, *unchristian*, pg. 75

⁹ Rainer, pg. 111

¹⁰ Bass, pg. 46

¹¹ David Brooks, “Building Better Secularists,” Feb. 3, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/03/opinion/david-brooks-building-better-secularists.html?_r=0

¹² John Meacham, “The End of Christian America,” April 3, 2009, www.newsweek.com/2009/04/03/the-end-of-christian-america.html.

The Lowdown on Millennials

The single most significant drop in church involvement, without question, comes during the transition from teen years to twenties. Teenagers rank as some of the most religiously active Americans, whereas twentysomethings are the least religiously active. There is a 43 percent drop-off in church engagement during that period. Out of those who previously attended church regularly, 59 percent of adults in their twenties report that they have dropped out of attending church.¹³ In other words, it doesn't appear to be as though this generation has been significantly less church-ed than previous generations in youth. What's unique is that by the time they've reached college or beyond, they opt out of church. What is the cause of this Millennial exodus from churches? Most (51 percent) say it is simply because their spiritual needs are not being met.¹⁴

Who are the Millennials?

So who are these difficult-to-please "Millennials?"

Technically, someone of the "Millennial" generation was born between 1980 and 2000. However, as already mentioned, when it comes to worship habits and other areas involving engagement in Christian faith, there is generally a large behavioral difference starting during the college years. So, while as of today, a 15-year-old is technically a Millennial, the faith engagement of a 15-year-old is comparatively quite good in our country. For the purposes of this paper, when "Millennial" is used, it's primarily then referencing an independent adult somewhere in the ages of early twenties to late thirties. Many generational researchers consider that the better categorization for Millennials.¹⁵

These Millennials are currently getting a pretty bad rap in the media. In his *YAHOO! FINANCE* column, Rick Newman notes that CNBC's research has discovered a general impression of Millennials in the workplace as "narcissistic, godless, precious, lazy." But Newman makes the case that Millennials are simply products of their Boomer parents. At least in our country, Boomers, rapidly increasing the nation's debt and emptying the coffers of Social Security and Medicare, will never be remembered as careful stewards of the institutions they inherited. Furthermore, the tremendous institutional skepticism that Boomers birthed, Millennials have now nurtured. Newman says, "Why is anybody surprised Millennials are turning out to be cynical, untrusting and mercenary? In the world they see, those traits are necessary to survive."¹⁶

Cable television entrepreneur Bob Buford discussed the uniqueness of Millennials in a fascinating interview he conducted with researcher David Kinnaman. Noting the shift in the self-assessment of various generations, he said that, in his surveying, when the Elder generation was asked to describe themselves, the most commonly used words/phrases were: "World War II and Depression, smarter, honest, work ethic, and values and morals." Boomers described their generation using terms like "work ethic, respectful, values and morals, and smarter." Busters (or Gen X) used terms like "technology use, work ethic, conservative or traditional, smarter, and respectful." And then he noted Millennials. The phrases they most commonly used? "Technology use, music and pop culture,

¹³ Kinnaman, pgs. 22-23

¹⁴ Lyons, pg. 22

¹⁵ Jason Dorsey. "The Top 10 Millennials & Gen Y Questions Answered" <http://jasondorsey.com/millennials/the-top-gen-y-questions-answered/>

¹⁶ Rick Newman. "If Millennials Are Jerks, Blame the Baby-Boomers" <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/if-millennials-are-jerks--blame-the-baby-boomers-200028612.html>

liberal or tolerant, smarter, and clothes.” He concluded, “Where has respect gone? Where is work ethic? To me, this shows that the next generation is not just sort of different; they are *discontinuously different*.”¹⁷

Scott Hess is the VP of Insights at TRU, one of the most respected and influential generational marketing consultants in the world. Hess has been quoted by major periodicals as a foremost authority on American youth. In his San Francisco TED Talk in 2011, his presentation “Millennials: Who They Are & Why We Hate Them” chronicled the major differences between Millennials and the generation before them, the Busters or Gen-Xers.¹⁸ Citing some clear and drastic generational differences, Hess says that where Busters were lean-back slackers, Millennials are lean-forward engagers. Busters were cliquish and judgmental. Millennials are inclusive and tolerant. Busters were anti-corporate. Millennials believe in commerce guided by conscience. Busters perceived parents as authority figures. Millennials perceive them as friends and helpers. Busters consumed mass media. Millennials prefer personal media.¹⁹

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the nature of Millennials is by deconstructing their favorite brand for five years running – Apple. Apple is a premium commodity in its genre, yet still accessible to almost all. There is no such thing as “high end” Apple. Everyone gets the same one, everyone starts in the same spot, but then you can go crazy with templated personalization. The technology is both fun and massively practical. Constant innovations and updates are applauded, not seen as frustrating change. Finally, the Apple brand also feels a bit like a movement. They have added philosophy to form and function, the perception that they are advancing humanity. More than any brand, Apple embodies the spirit of Millennials.

What’s Driving Millennials Away?

We’ve already established that Millennials are leaving churches and that Millennials are “discontinuously different” in their outlook on life from previous generations. But what is driving them away? To simply say “this is a wicked and godless generation” and “the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine.” (2 Tim. 4:3) *might* apply here, or it might simply be dismissive, failing to acknowledge that we have yet to do the humbling, difficult, personal-preference-sacrificing work the Apostle Paul alludes to when he says, “I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel.” (1 Cor. 9:22-23) In other words, while acknowledging that they, like us, are sinful and naturally resistant to the truth of God (Rom. 8:7), perhaps ministering to Millennials is *primarily* a matter of acknowledging that they think differently, not inherently better or worse, but *different*, from many of us.

¹⁷ Kinnaman, pgs. 37-38

¹⁸ Scott Hess, TEDxSF – “Millennials: Who They Are & Why We Hate Them,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-enHHR_FM

¹⁹ Another way of painting the generational difference is to look at late night television. Millennials largely now prefer Jimmy Fallon in contrast to Busters/Boomers, who prefer David Letterman (or Jimmy Kimmel). Many Busters/Boomers consider Fallon a little flaky and Letterman witty. Millennials see Fallon as funny and Letterman as kind of a jerk. Letterman is combative and exclusive. Fallon is self-effacing and inclusive. Who is “better” is largely an issue of generational perception. Consider John Walters’ “Fallon Is the King on YouTube but Not on the Night's Talk Shows”, <http://www.newsweek.com/fallon-king-youtube-not-nights-talk-shows-305629>

For starters, Millennials had a massively different upbringing than previous generations. Kids today are eight times more likely to have come into the world without married parents than were Boomers.²⁰ Understandably, without the influence of a healthy, functioning parental unit, they are then slower to grow up. And because the two figures (i.e. parents) that humans are created to trust most intrinsically cannot fully be counted on, not as a unit/institution anyways, these young adults are tremendously skeptical. Because their God-given authorities have often proven themselves untrustworthy, Millennials have had to navigate a different route to find authentic authorities. Authority tends to come only after personal investment and communal accountability, i.e. genuine connection, has been established. In other words, don't expect Millennials to willfully submit to long-standing systems or structures of expertise. Traditional structures have largely failed them from birth. They feel very little sense of obligation and therefore care far less about pre-existing "rules" than their predecessors. Diana Butler Bass states the shift in the perception of authority like this:

"In the post-World War II period, Western societies underwent what philosopher Charles Taylor calls 'an expressivist revolution,' whereby obligatory group identity – whether of nation, family, or church – was replaced with a new sense of individual authenticity and the 'right of choices' based in personal fulfillment. External authorities gave way to internal ones, as we moved away from conformity to social structures toward the authentic self in society. Whether the switch is good or bad is beside the point. This revolution has happened."²¹

Without question, personal choice now trumps social obligation. Consumer mentality wins over organizational loyalty. This has significantly shaped the landscape of American church. What is a congregation to do if they try to enact church discipline? Only 59 percent of Americans currently believe in hell and far fewer think there is any chance that they, their loved ones, or the neighbors they don't even know, would ever go there.²² This young American "under church discipline" will simply find a new church that will be more accepting of their behavior, beliefs, or desires. Much like the average coffee chain that literally has nearly 100,000 possible options for drinks, the Millennial who doesn't like some things that his/her church teaches will simply determine that this church "isn't for me." Unfortunately, the desperation for growth and survival has led many churches to accommodate. As we'll see later, this is ironically one of the things that Millennials claim they dislike about churches – they are too shallow and unable to change lives.

Currently, Millennials don't see much difference between Christianity and other religions, or more specifically, between the Bible, the Qur'an, and the Book of Mormon. Nearly 60 percent of them believe these works offer the same basic spiritual truths as compared to only 33 percent of adults over sixty-four.²³ As disheartening for Christianity is the fact that so few Millennials (less than 1 in 5) consider any sort of spirituality to be important in their lives.²⁴ In some ways, this is the scariest

²⁰ Kinnaman, pgs. 46-47

²¹ Bass, pg. 141

²² Ibid., pg. 42

²³ Ibid, pg. 51

²⁴ Rainer, pg. 22

possible news. If more young adults were actually antagonistic about Christianity, then they'd at least have it on their radar, investigating its claims and considering the cause of their animosity. But they're default is distrust. They're agnostic about everything. They have so much difficulty untangling who in their lives they can really rely on that something like supernatural religious claims almost seems too undecipherable.

Consequently, Millennials rely heavily upon what *feels* right. What seems *fair* is more powerful to them than what someone tells them is objectively *right*. Since so many truth claims are scientifically untestable, and since Millennials grew up hating the relational dissolution they experienced with their parents, they are constantly pushing for unity. Boomers were often skeptical of others but caustic in their attitudes. Millennials want to get along. They are forgiving and relational and have great difficulty understanding why other generations don't feel the same way. They love family. They long for togetherness. They hate constant negative speech about other political parties, have no time for comments that suggest racial bias, and will opt out of any Christian church that is obsessed with pointing out the flaws in other Christian churches.

Perhaps surprisingly, in light of all that's been said, Millennials still largely believe in God. While Millennials tend to be the *most* unbelieving in the United States, still only 1.6 percent of the overall American population claims to be atheist. When you add together the percentages of Americans who are certain of God's existence with those who say they have some doubts, you get to approximately 92 percent of the population.²⁵ That number is fairly historically consistent with previous generations.

So why are so many Millennials leaving churches? David Kinnaman says:

“When someone uses this idiom (“You lost me”), they are suggesting that something hasn’t translated, that the message has not been received. ‘Wait, I don’t understand. You lost me.’ This is what many (Millennials) are saying to the church...it’s not that they’re not listening; it’s that they can’t understand what we’re saying...The transmission of faith from one generation to the next relies on the messy and sometimes flawed process of young people finding meaning for themselves in the traditions of their parents....But what happens when the process of relationships and sources of wisdom change? What happens to the transference of faith when the world we know slips out from under our collective feet? We have to find new processes – a new mind – that make sense of faith in our new reality.”²⁶

Are Millennials a lost cause? Of course not. Let's not forget, the Holy Spirit's basic work is to take those who are dead and make them alive (Eph. 2:1-5). It's no less miraculous that God awakened believers in previous generations where universal morality, recognized authority structures, and belief in biblical inerrancy weren't in question. God can and will accomplish what he desires with this generation as well. However, he has tasked us with the unique, beautiful, messy responsibility of mission work to this “discontinuously different” generation.

²⁵ Bass, pg. 49

²⁶ Kinnaman, pg. 39

The things that obviously don't change? First, we continue to recognize that our true power to make impact for God's Kingdom is the dynamite of the gospel (Rom. 1:16). Second, we come before God's throne in prayer, asking for wisdom, opportunity, and blessing (1 Tim. 2:1-4). Third, we approach mission work to Millennials with the humility that comes from having applied the gospel to our own hearts, understanding that the only reason we count ourselves as God's children is because, by sheer grace expressed through our Savior Jesus, while we were dead in sin, God rescued us (Rom. 5:8). We can unabashedly and accurately admit to Millennials (and mankind) that we are all fundamentally more alike than we are different – we are all sinners gifted with salvation by the grace of Christ Jesus.

With that in mind, we can work to overcome the most common negative perceptions that Millennials undeniably have about churches and the Christians who attend them.

Negative Perceptions Millennials Have About Church and Christians Too Shallow

Considered by many as the most influential pastor in recent American history, Bill Hybels notoriously admitted in 2007 that “We made a mistake” by being overly dependent on programs at the expense of “age-old spiritual practices of prayer, Bible reading, and relationships.”²⁷ By and large, Millennials agree.

While teen engagement remains relatively high across denominations, the supposed enthusiasm of teens in North American churches appears to fade by the time college, the twenties, and independence arrive. Disciples have not been made. Faith hasn't been rooted, or at least rooted enough to endure the trials and temptations of unmonitored adult life.

The Christian Millennials that seem to fair the best when it comes to faith retention, without question, are the millions of young people who are taught to believe that the Bible is entirely the inspired Word of God. Families with the highest view of Scripture have the best rates of generational faith transference.²⁸ In the twentieth century, you could safely assume that spiritual beliefs would be transmitted through American family lines, i.e. what the parents were, the kids would become. Ethnicities, too, often had preferred denominations. Much of this has gone away. Millennials don't see ethnic variance the way their parents or grandparents do, nor do they perceive religious differences the same way. Currently, 45 percent of Americans opt out of their family's faith.²⁹ More so with Millennials.

Millennials are largely opting out of church engagement altogether because they perceive it to be ineffective. They simply do not see a connection between the gospel of Jesus Christ and their day-to-day lives. Generally speaking, many Millennials “strongly agreed” that church is boring (31 percent), irrelevant to career (24 percent), unable to prepare people for real life (23 percent), fails to give purpose to their lives (23 percent), and is unclear in teaching (23 percent).³⁰ Put differently, while Millennials seem to have some intellectual semblance of the basic Christian framework of

²⁷ “Willow Creek Repents?” October 18, 2007, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/parse/2007/october/willow-creek-repents.html>

²⁸ Kinnaman, pg. 52

²⁹ Bass, pg. 140

³⁰ Kinnaman, pg. 117

“faith in Jesus leads to salvation,” they don’t see the gospel as a comprehensive way of understanding the reality of the world or the meaning of life, or as John puts it, “the Logos.” (John 1) While the American church seems to have communicated the exclusivity of Jesus’ claims, it hasn’t explained as well the expansive implications of those claims.

For instance, if the gospel means that we’re all saved entirely by grace, that means that every human is fundamentally more alike than different, which in turn means that I never have the right to condescendingly look down on someone else as *worse* than me, because I too, just like that person, am a sinner who can only be saved by grace. Furthermore, I would never have to crumble under the fear of considering someone else *better* than me, because, after all, that person, just like me, is a sinner who can only be saved by the grace of God. If every human believed this, it would logically bring about the end of things like racism, classicism, and sexism. The average “Christian” Millennial, however, is not putting two and two together. Consequently, so far as I can tell, Protestant Christianity has decently taught a salvation by grace but has poorly taught the thought, attitude, and lifestyle implications of that same gospel grace. Young adults are not clearly seeing Christians use the gospel as a powerful resource for navigating through life more effectively than their secular counterparts. To some degree, that *must* mean that the American church’s gospel is too shallow.

Anti-Sexual

According to some recent research, four out of five unmarried evangelicals ages eighteen to twenty-nine have had sex.³¹ Some studies even suggest that while evangelical young adults hold less sexually permissive attitudes than their peers, they are not at all the last to lose their virginity. They may perhaps even possess *above-average* sexual activity patterns.³² Couple this seeming anomaly with the fact that the social norm for Millennials is now that about 65 percent will cohabit at least once prior to marriage (compared to just 10 percent in the 1960s) and you have to conclude that American Christians are not processing sexual temptations well.³³

The American church has long been perceived as a bit prudish. Perhaps that’s because a secular world has little to no respect for God’s design for human sexuality. Or perhaps it’s because the American church has long been, in fact, a bit prudish. How many Christian homes have refused to have God-pleasing, biblically-driven conversations about God’s gift of sex? Of the young men and women that I’ve counseled, including on sexual issues, my current guess is somewhere around “none.” For some reason, the issues that are likely on the minds of young adults the most – sex, money/career, and the meaning of life – are woefully unaddressed by Christian parents and Christian churches. When the issue of sex does come up, it’s almost always in negative terms so that the understandable conclusion that many young people draw from their traditional, conservative environments is that sex is a bit dirty, almost a necessary evil in the world.

Furthermore, the constant use of “homosexuality” as Exhibit A of the collapse of society is seen by most Millennials as unfair cherry-picking. Rightfully, Millennials have discovered the self-righteousness that exists in judging others on the basis of a temptation that you yourself don’t

³¹ Tyler Charles, “True Love Isn’t Waiting,” *Neue* 6 (April/May 2011), pgs. 32-36

³² Mark Regnerus, *Forbidden Fruit*, pg. 206.

³³ Rainer, pg. 3

struggle with. Millennials are tired of hearing comments from their Christian elders about cutting off relationships with unrepentant homosexuals but being (seemingly) perfectly fine with their peer group of unrepentant gossipers. There is often a smugness in the way churches speak about sex and (disproportionately) about sexual sins. Millennials are more disgusted by that holier-than-thou attitude than they are by the sexual indecencies. Without making too fine a point of it, just note that in doing so, they're in decent company (Matt. 21:31-32).

Inability to Express Doubts

Over a third of young Christians (36 percent) currently say that they don't feel as if they could ask the most pressing questions they have about their lives at their churches.³⁴ The church is not seen as a safe place to express any doubt. While science seems to encourage skepticism, theory, dialogue, and mutual learning, church is seen more as a place where doubts are chastised and stomped out as quickly as possible.

This inability to express true feelings and opinions runs completely perpendicular to Millennial transparency. This generation is not just open, but radically transparent. Social networking is all about living in view and thinking out loud. An environment that doesn't allow *any* of that doesn't allow Millennials. Millennials are a "conversation generation" who want to discuss, debate, and question EVERYTHING.³⁵ They perceive many Christians as dialoguing only to hammer a point and win an argument, not genuinely learn. This naturally leads them to see theological conservatism as aloof.

To connect with this group, the learning style has to be a bit more Socratic. Highly relational and inherently inclusive, Millennials will reject any learning environment that isn't, to some extent, perceived as "mutual learning." In other words, "Thus saith the Lord" will not resonate with them. Why? Because who are you to claim you know what God says? Millennials are aware that, just like you, the Catholic priest down the road and the non-denom minister are also claiming to have an authoritative message from God, but these messages all contradict on some levels. While Millennials don't know nearly as much as they think they do, they have significantly more access to knowledge than previous generations. They know that all three ministers claim something different and all three can't be right. This doesn't mean they'll reject the Bible outright. It means you need to walk them through the steps of *HOW* we know the Bible teaches a specific point and *WHY*. They won't take your word for it. You need to lead them on an experiential learning journey, a narrative thought exercise, not simply download information into their heads.

Hypocritical

More than any other comment I've heard from young adults who go through adult instruction classes is that they were previously disenchanted with the church because of hypocritical Christians.

Granted, plagued by sin, we're always going to struggle with some hypocrisy this side of heaven. But, to what extent? Gabe Lyons writes:

³⁴ Kinnaman, pg. 192

³⁵ Lyons, *unchristian*, pg. 33

“Of course, during his time on earth, Jesus experienced criticism too. But the negative perceptions he inspired seem fundamentally different from what we deal with in America today. I imagine Jesus and his early followers were much more likely to be perceived as lunatics, radicals, rebels, and cultists than to be thought of as hypocritical.”³⁶

By way of example, fewer than one out of every ten churching Christians donates at least 10 percent of their income to churches and other nonprofit organizations. However, more than one-third claim to do so.³⁷ I’m saying nothing here about what a Christian *should* give, only that the claims of these Christians are significantly larger than the reality. Remember, Millennials have had to sift through endless levels of marketing in their short lives. By adulthood, they’ve learned to decipher authentic from disingenuous. Therefore, to a typical Millennial, it’d be far better to give nothing and be honest about it than give something and lie about your generosity. True-to-self, ugly transparency is nobler than self-glorifying deception.

Consequently, the fact that there is an enormous percentage of Americans who label themselves “Christian” but seemingly allow Christ to have little control over their lives is a major turn off to Millennials.³⁸ While they are open to many different beliefs and perspectives, hypocrisy is arguably the one thing that is seen as universally disgusting.

Judgmental/Exclusive

If Millennials have a cultural North Star for behavior, it’s *tolerance*. In part, this is the natural reaction of a generation that has grown up with peers who are significantly more diverse – ethnically, religiously, relationally, and sexually – than their parents and grandparents. They have zero patience for mistreatment of those who are different. Inclusiveness, diversity, and political correctness are the ideals that have shaped Millennials.

Many in this generation then perceive Christians to have something of an *insider/outsider* mentality.³⁹ In the twentieth century, Christians by and large identified their faith denominationally, almost by what they were *against* as much as by what they actually stood *for*. Millennials are immediately turned off by such a mindset. They’re constantly looking to find points of commonality rather than points of contention. If differences do need to be addressed, they strongly feel a need to do so with humility and respect. They want churches to be more tactful about how they approach the morality of others whom they do not agree with. And they commonly want to allow outsiders to participate in some capacity, even if two parties are not entirely on the same page.

³⁶ Ibid., pg. 45

³⁷ Barna, *Revolution*, pg. 34

³⁸ According to *The Seven Faith Tribes* by George Barna, somewhere around 79 percent of Americans self-identify as “Christian” while only around 18 percent of Americans (whom he labels as “Captive Christians”) are actually willing to inconvenience or disrupt their lifestyles for the sake of Biblical truth. If this gap is true, and I personally believe he’s on to something, then this 60 percent of America that calls itself “Christian” but refuses to recognize or live by the authority of Scripture defines America. It’s the “average American.”

³⁹ Kinnaman, pg. 171

As an alternative to criticizing or condemning what we don't like, Millennials are much more interested in changing the culture by creating something better than the current status quo that we may not like.⁴⁰ So, instead of complaining about the immorality found in modern movies and music, create better movies and music that more suits your morality. Instead of lamenting the increasing prevalence of homosexual relationships, present a better image of heterosexual relationships. Most young Millennial Christians, instead of hiding themselves in the bubble of private institutions, would prefer to be encouraged to use the transforming power of the gospel to improve existing institutions.

In short, Millennials want to be *for* something, not *against* something else. And they're annoyed that you don't think that way.

Too Political

Barack Obama was elected into office largely due to Millennials. Eighteen to twenty-nine-year-olds voted for Obama at an overwhelming sixty-six to thirty-two margin.⁴¹ Obama is perceived as inclusive, different, tech-savvy, passionate, genuine, and insightful. This is exactly what Millennials want to be. Everything about the man is "Millennial" except for his age.

Since the early 1980s, Americans have tended to identify Christians with the "Religious Right." In 1985, 26 percent of young adults under twenty-nine claimed to be evangelicals. Currently, the number is around 15 percent. In that same timeframe, the category of "nones" (i.e. not religiously affiliated) in that age bracket has jumped from 12 percent to nearly 30 percent. And in virtually every study conducted, young Americans cite the entanglement of church and state as a reason for disinterest in faith organizations. Christians voting their beliefs is not perceived as loving, nor as a free expression of faith, but rather as a power play simply to control the behavior of others.

As James Emory White puts it:

"Christianity is again under fire; not because it is intellectually untenable to new arguments lodged by heirs to Darwin or Freud, but because we are perceived to be overly entangled with law and politics, filled with hateful aggression, and consumed with greed."⁴²

Bad Attempts at "Cool"

In what Thom Rainer called "one of the most significant findings" of his extensive research on this generation, "94 percent of Millennials indicated that, to some degree, they have great respect for older generations."⁴³ They *want* to learn from their predecessors. What may also surprise some is that 41 percent of Millennial Christians describe a desire "for a more traditional faith, rather than a hip version of Christianity."⁴⁴ For the most part, they do not dislike tradition. They are, however, bored with hollow tradition. Unless they see a practical purpose for a faith expression, they

⁴⁰ Andy Crouch, *Culture Making* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), pg. 67

⁴¹ Rainer, pgs. 2-3

⁴² White, pgs. 36-37

⁴³ Rainer, pg. 88

⁴⁴ Kinnaman, pg. 27

cynically perceive much of what church's do as a performance, and a bit of a self-righteous one at that.

Millennials are far too perceptive to buy attempts at cool. What they find attractive is authentic, meaningful, genuine passion. As a church, you can neither come off as impassionate (cold and unaffected by your beliefs), nor as disingenuously passionate (emotionally manipulative). You're not a good enough actor to fool them. You'd better truly care about what you're trying to persuade them of, and your lifestyle of service, patience, and forgiveness to others better be backing it up.

Unable to Adapt with the Times

Millennials have lived their entire lives with countless choices. In 2009, the Coca-Cola corporation released a fountain machine that possesses a 146 flavor dispenser, called *Freestyle*. According to Tom Pirdo, CEO of Bevmark Consulting, "Freestyle is an admission by Big Soda that they have to endorse a young drinker's consciousness."⁴⁵ It's technology, options, and quality. That's what Millennials are used to.

While they don't anticipate that a church is going to offer the same level of personalized options as major corporations, they also consider themselves far too individual than to have their needs be adequately met by the long-standing "one size fits all" approach of churches in the past.

Millennials, as a generation, aren't asking churches to alter their teachings, no more so than any previous generation anyways. They don't, however, recognize a connection between a church's articles of faith and a certain style of worship, governance structure, program palette, or refusal to embrace technology. And since I'm sure every pastor wants to know, Millennials don't have a strong preference of style for their worship music. They do, however, want their worship music to be rich in content, objectively beautiful, possess high quality in its execution, and create an authentic (i.e. personally meaningful and passionate) experience. But they will walk away from your congregation quite quickly if they hear people still fighting about worship styles.⁴⁶

Study after study seems to indicate that local churches already have lost any real social influence. Currently, the seven dominant spheres of influence are considered to be movies, music, television, books, the Internet, law, and family. The tier underneath consists of schools, peers, newspapers, radio, and businesses. Very few people report the local church as a culture-changing factor on society anymore.⁴⁷

Many Christian leaders might listen to a Millennial's desire to make some logistical changes in church and say, "Tough. This is the way it's been for 2000 years." Just understand, Millennials will deem you as "closed-minded," politely say, "Okay" and walk. Many have already done so. They have almost no sense of organizational loyalty or religious obligation. While pandering to consumerism is obviously not a healthy option for churches, stubbornly digging in heels on matters that we are free to change is equally unhealthy. Many churches are desperately in a stage of needing to wrestle with a Pauline willingness to "become all things to all people so that by all possible means (we)

⁴⁵ Bruce Horvitz, "Coke Aims for Cool with New 146-Flavor Dispenser"
<http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2014/04/14/coca-cola-coke-freestyle-soft-drinks-beverages/7478341/>

⁴⁶ <http://thomrainer.com/2014/04/02/worship-style-attracts-millennials/>

⁴⁷ Barna, pg. 118

might save some...for the sake of the gospel.” (1 Cor. 9:22-23) How do we reach out without selling out? This has been part of the artistry of mission work since the dawn of the Christian Church. The gospel must remain unchanged. But other elements of church life not only freely *can* be, but *must* be adapted, so that by all possible means we might save some...for the sake of the gospel.

What IS Effective in Reaching Millennials?

A proper understanding of the Means of Grace indicates clearly that the Holy Spirit alone is responsible for making the spiritual corpse alive (Eph. 2:1-10), for making poor sinners rich in the Kingdom of God (2 Cor. 8:9), for turning strangers and enemies of God into heirs of eternal life (Titus 3:5-7). He does this through the power and proclamation of the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:17). Cutting and healing with the truth of His Word, the Holy Spirit is the one who operates on, and heals, sick hearts.

That said, a wise man once told me that there is both an instrumental and a ministerial cause in God’s plan of salvation, i.e. God impacts our hearts with the truth of His Word by communicating it both supernaturally and psychologically.⁴⁸ This is perhaps most clearly illustrated in Scripture as Philip asked the Ethiopian statesman if he understood what he was reading in Isaiah 53, to which the man reasons, “How can I, unless someone explains it to me?” (Acts 8:31). Is this in any way undermining the efficacy of the Spirit? Not at all. The same God who inspired the Scriptures to be written in human language by human hands also moves us to use the gifts which he himself blessed us with to best communicate that life-giving message. Put differently, in gospel proclamation, clear communication matters.

With that in mind, anyone who cares about transmitting the gospel to the next generation, Millennials, is going to want to understand what the best research says about what is effective in communicating with Millennials. So we turn to some leaders in the field.

David Kinnaman believes that churches need to focus on three points to reach the next generation: 1) reconsider how we make disciples (he cites intergenerational mentoring as an area to continue pursuing); 2) rediscover Christian calling and vocation; and 3) reprioritize wisdom over mere information transmission as we seek to better know God.⁴⁹

Thom Rainer says that Millennials 1) are attracted to smaller venues (encouraging news for small churches!); 2) want to influence culture, not avoid it or denounce it; 3) want to cooperate with others, not constantly cite differences; 4) are disgusted by worship wars; 5) love churches that embrace their communities; 6) demand small groups; 7) recognize the necessity of “groups” for worship and study, but want any ministry training to be at their own convenience; 8) are insanely curious and are going to question everything (“we’ve always done it that way” is not acceptable to them); 9) are slow to join and slow to leave congregations; 10) want their church to have a clear, intentional plan for their growth and involvement.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Jonathan R. Hein, “Treasure in Jars of Clay: The Synergy Between the Instrumental and Ministerial Causes in God’s Plan of Salvation”; <http://www.wlssays.net/node/2224>

⁴⁹ Kinnaman, pg. 201

⁵⁰ Thom Rainer, “Ten Ways Millennials Are Shaping Local Congregations Today”, <http://thomrainer.com/2014/08/13/ten-ways-millennials-shaping-local-congregations-today/>

George Barna says that there are seven key ways in which Millennials are changing churches today: Millennials 1) embrace change; 2) desire *dialogue*, not *monologue* (typical of post-modern learning); 3) find *relevance* to be even more important than *excellence*; 4) anticipate a certain level of tech-savvy; 5) are highly relational, more so than previous generations; 6) must be allowed to participate in some capacity; 7) want a church that possesses high expectations of its people.⁵¹

Gabe Lyons suggests that those currently *outside* the church, including many Millennials, have several things they clearly want people *inside* the church to know about them, which mostly revolve around the idea of respect: 1) Please listen to me (don't just preach at me); 2) Don't label me (don't assume you know my type); 3) Don't be so smart (admit that there aren't easy pat answers to life's toughest questions); 4) Put yourself in my place (sympathize before you judge); 5) Be genuine (don't just present the image of yourself that you think you *should*); 6) Be my friend with no other motives (don't use me to feel good about converting someone).⁵²

Mark Driscoll encourages the continued pursuit of multisite options, video-venues, and leadership teaming. He notes that seven of the country's fastest growing churches offer worship in multiple locations, as do nine of the ten largest churches.⁵³ Millennials were raised in front of screens. They not only do their entertainment this way, but they increasingly are pursuing their education and fostering their relationships through screens. Good or bad, it is the new reality. In the same way that the printing press was leveraged to launch the Reformation, a digital technology generation is still waiting to have their spiritual needs fully met through their numerous screens.

Some additional quick thoughts are that 76 percent of Millennials own smartphones. Over 90 percent use social networking sites. Millennials are incredibly visual, especially with digital imagery, as over 80 percent regularly post photos online. Consequently, they also have a difficult time respecting any content that does not incorporate videos or high quality imaging. And if you don't know how you're doing in this arena, just ask. Millennials are more than happy to provide feedback.⁵⁴

I think many of these influential church leaders, and a host of others I've read, have some valid points and I will provide a synopsis of my main thoughts and recommendations later on in the paper.

Future Expectations

George Barna claims that if we continue on the current trajectory of American involvement in the local church, 2025 will look something like this (Fig. 1).

I tend to think something will give before it comes to his predictions. In the same way that the "house church movement" hasn't exactly redefined

How Americans Experience and Express Their Faith				
<i>Primary means of spiritual experience and expression.</i>				
	Local Church	Alternative Faith-Based Community	Family	Media, Arts, Culture
2000	70%	5%	5%	20%
2025	30-35%	30-35%	5%	30-35%

⁵¹ Barna, pgs. 42-47

⁵² Lyons, pgs. 194-195

⁵³ Mark Driscoll, *Vintage Church*, pgs. 245-247

⁵⁴ <http://wideo.co/blog/the-science-behind-reaching-millennials/>

Figure 1 - Barna, *Revolution*, pg. 49

American Christianity, I don't know that, for instance, there is any strong indication that "online churches" are the wave of the future. Nonetheless, to suggest that local church life *will* (or philosophically *should*) look exactly the same in the next 10-20 years would seemingly be to ignore all of the data we've sorted through thus far.

Many commentators on the state of American Christianity seem to think that we are perhaps on verge of another "Awakening" in our country. Many historians have chronicled in detail the steps of the previous Great Awakenings (First, 1730-1760; Second 1800-1830; Third, 1890-1920). They all seem to agree on some common elements of *awakening*, that, although we cannot program them, seem to be the pattern in which the Spirit of God generally works. First, there is some sort of collective social despair due to lack of identity and recognition of moral indecency. This is followed by a higher standard for self and social institutions. Certain articulate leaders begin to encourage a repentance of old ways as well as provide a vision for something better, leveraging technology and inspiring communities, where a new sense of grace, and subsequent joy, then abounds.⁵⁵ While not exactly the same, the cycle is not profoundly different from what we find in the Book of Judges, or, for that matter, in the individual believer's life of repentance.

Millennials, as a generation, though exiting local churches and the profession of Christian faith in historically unprecedented ways for our country, are certainly not beyond hope, nor uniquely burdened by impenetrable, undecipherable unbelief. They need Law and Gospel. They need the grace of God to forgive them and make them alive, just like the rest of us. The ministerial skill will be in communicating Law and Gospel with all of the humility, grace, understanding, and complex emotion that, say, Paul used as he is "greatly distressed" by the idolatry he saw in Athens (Act 17:16). He got to know these people ("I see that you are...") (Acts 17:22). And then he courageously, sympathetically, humbly communicated with them in a way that they could understand. And *some* of them believed and wanted to hear more about this Jesus (Acts 17:34).

These highly educated, pluralistic, hedonistic Athenians weren't beyond the power of God's converting grace, nor are their twenty-first century counterparts.

My Top Recommendations Concerning Millennials

While I wouldn't suggest that all of these recommendations are *equally* important, to avoid insinuating a "silver bullet" attitude in ministering to Millennials, I'll refrain from ordering these in any sort of ranking. Suffice it to say, I think that they're all issues that Millennials, including those within our church body, tend to be affected by.

Connect Faith to Life

Researcher David Kinnman said,

"For me, the most heartbreaking aspect of our findings is the utter lack of clarity that many young people have regarding what God is asking them to do with their lives. It is a modern tragedy. Despite years of church-based experiences and countless hours of bible-centered teaching, millions of next

⁵⁵ Particularly helpful here were William McLoughlin's *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978), pg. 12ff and Jonathan Edwards' *An Humble Attempt* (1747).

generation Christians have no idea that their faith connects to their life's work.⁵⁶

I guess it doesn't surprise me, because I struggled with this for many years myself, but, as a pastor, when I ask people about what their purpose is on this planet, I get a lot of blank stares. This is particularly true of young people. For some reason, as young people are trying to carve out their place in this world and establish their identity, despite many occasions of Bible contact, they can't seem to recognize (or at least verbalize) that their identity comes primarily from their status as God's redeemed children and that their purpose, just like the first humans, is to exist in relationship with the God who created them, carry out his designed will for them (i.e. responsibly manage and subdue his creation), and do so while reflecting out to others the grace that this amazing God has shown to them in Jesus. I rarely, if ever, get anything other than blank stares.

Why young Christians don't grasp this faith-life connection is probably multifaceted. In general, their life goals seem to mirror that of the secular Americans around them. In something of an instant philosophical classic called *A Secular Age*, philosopher Charles Taylor says that post-Enlightenment, the western world has gone through something he refers to as an "anthropocentric turn."⁵⁷ By this, Taylor means that, while western civilization (including our most educated, influential people) once generally believed in God, today, the belief in God's presence and involvement in life has drastically faded. Consequently, where our society's goal at one point looked something more along the lines of "glorify God," now, the basic goal of the average American is to find pleasure, comfort, and happiness. In more negative terms, our goal is the avoidance of suffering, fundamentally at odds with Christ's exhortation to pick up our crosses to follow him (Matt. 10:38; 16:24).

Furthermore, if Millennials don't understand the basic reason for their existence, they're certainly not going to understand the implications of God's gospel of grace for their lives either. Paul's concept of "working out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12) is a foreign concept. Paul is obviously not talking here about working *for* salvation. Rather, he's suggesting that as we know we have salvation gifted to us in Christ, it now has implications and applications in our every day lives. So, for instance, if we're all truly saved *by grace*, then I never have the right to look down on anyone else as inferior to me, nor do I ever have to fear looking up at anyone else as superior to me, because we're all sinners saved by the grace of God. Millennials will love that aspect of gospel inclusiveness. And this is just the start. If God has been infinitely generous in sharing his riches with me, I am empowered to be generous with others less fortunate (2 Cor. 8:9). If God can and does objectively forgive me even *before* I repent (Rom. 5:8), then this empowers me to extend forgiveness to others, even when I don't get the "I'm sorry" I'm seeking, or perhaps no remorse at all. Furthermore, if the doctrine of Final Judgment means that one day everyone will have to give an account before God for what they've done, this empowers me to not show vengeance on those who have wronged me, because they either will fully repent of their errors or will have to answer to God someday. Finally, the doctrine of the Resurrection means that all the wrongs of sin will somehow be

⁵⁶ Kinnaman, pg. 207

⁵⁷ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pgs. 373-375

righted. For God's people, all that is dead will be made alive. Consequently, when this life doesn't go the way I'd like it to, like Paul, I mourn, but not like the rest of the world mourns (1 Thess. 4:13).

So far as I can tell, young believers are not consistently being guided to make these sorts of connections. Or, if they are, it's not clicking. Millennials are craving to connect biblical truth to the realities of every day life. They need to see the unparalleled resources the gospel provides for dealing with the complexities of life. In other words, they not only need to hear the saving elements of gospel truth, but they also need to see Jesus and his gospel work as the fundamental meaning of life, the Logos that then is naturally the most effective approach to life (John 1:1-18).

Reclaim "Fellowship" as a Positive Thing

As a child attending a Lutheran Elementary School, my main experience with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod was through athletics. My primary understanding of Missouri theology came from the fact that before sporting events, when their announcers would say a prayer asking God for safety and sportsmanship in the game, we were told beforehand not to pray with them. I didn't understand exactly *why*. I simply knew it had something to do with the word "fellowship."

Today, whenever I preside over a wedding, at some point during the premarital counseling and service preparations, the conversation of which family members will or will not be allowed to participate in the wedding inevitably comes up. This is an issue at virtually every WELS wedding. And it rarely comes off well. In fact, I've had several friends who've left WELS, and the tipping point was their own wedding. Again, the key word that becomes a sore spot is "fellowship."

I don't have a perfect solution to remedy all of this. I'm certainly not suggesting we leave sound theology behind. I'm simply suggesting that if the average young person in WELS associates the word "fellowship" with something of a negative connotation, our theology probably isn't being communicated as clearly as we'd like. In retrospect, telling a 6th grader not to pray at a basketball game with a Missouri Lutheran elementary school feels a bit like maneuvering a child as a pawn in a fellowship war. If it's truly a concern, perhaps a better alternative would be to have a pastor contact the other school ahead of time and respectfully, tactfully, explain how this is a sensitive issue and ask if it could, as a favor, possibly be avoided. That'd be an improvement. Or just play public schools where this would never happen. As it stands, it is a sore spot for nearly every young WELS person I've encountered. We (i.e. Millennials) want to be sensitive to how many WELS members went through a difficult time with Missouri in the 1970s. But we also want you to know that we DID NOT. We weren't alive.

Furthermore, whether or not they realize it, there are *some* WELS youth who *do* trumpet the merit of closed fellowship as though it is the doctrine by which the Church stands and falls. They tend to come across as self-righteous and out-of-touch to their Millennial peers. These characters don't seem to recognize their synodical zeal for what it may occasionally be, condescending tribalism that drives others away. In other words, it might be less because, as they think, the time has come "when people will not put up with sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3) or because of "the increase of wickedness, the hearts of many have grown cold" (Matt. 24:12). That might be *part* of denominational differences. Or, in some instances, it might be more that humans are justifiably turned off by sanctimonious, unchristlike arrogance. This self-righteousness needs to be repented of as much as any other sin. To date, I'm afraid this attitude has not only *not* been held accountable, but has

actually been cultivated by some spiritual leaders. Put differently, if “elder brother” bad behavior (Luke 15:25-32) is never called to repentance, but sin is only defined in terms of “younger brother” bad behavior (Luke 15:11-21), you will be left with churches full of an elder brother spirit. And, of course, once you get to know the elder brother in Jesus’ parable, you start to understand why the younger brother wanted so desperately to run away from home.⁵⁸

Please understand, I’m not suggesting that this negative perception of “WELS people are holier-than-thou” is all right or fair, only that it’s undeniably there. Nor am I calling for a complete overhaul in our practices regarding interdenominational church fellowship. I’m simply saying that if you think closed fellowship was an issue for Boomers or Busters, that is nothing compared to the sensitivity that inherently inclusive Millennials have for it. Consequently, for the sake of the gospel, we probably need to revisit some contemporary applications of the Doctrine of Fellowship. And if nothing else, the unarguably necessary (but socially counterintuitive) aspects of close fellowship (e.g. Member Communion) need to be balanced with overwhelming demonstrations of the positives of “fellowship” that resonate with everyone. Fellowship, in and of itself, is a wonderful Scriptural concept. We need to work hard for it to once again become one in the mind of WELS youth. If we don’t, remember, this generation feels almost no organizational obligation or loyalty to traditional authority structures. They will gladly leave their parents’ church. I’d hate for that to happen over a widespread misunderstanding of a beautiful biblical teaching.

Church Experience Must Be More Relational

As a continuation of the last point on fellowship, Millennials are extremely relational. As an organization, you *will* lose them if you don’t help them foster relationships. As Thom Rainer has said,

“The best motivators in the workplace for this generation are relationships. The best connectors in religious institutions are relationships. The best way to get a Millennial involved in a service, activity, or ministry is through relationship.”⁵⁹

Whether he realized it or not, when describing the African concept of “Ubuntu,” Archbishop Desmond Tutu was essentially speaking for Millennials:

“A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, based from a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater

⁵⁸ Timothy Keller’s exposition of Luke 15:11-32 in “The Prodigal God” might be the greatest spiritual insight I’ve ever gained in my adult life. It was brand new to me as an adult. And it has probably also been the single greatest step in spiritual development that I’ve witnessed in my members. They are now well tuned-in to the idea that there are two equally dangerous ways to avoid Jesus – i.e. self-indulgence (avoiding Jesus as Lord) AND self-righteousness (avoiding Jesus as Savior). The misnomer of “The Parable of the Lost Son” might be the single greatest mistake in our English Bibles. After all, Jesus begins the parable by saying, “There was a man who had *two* sons.” (Luke 15:11)

⁵⁹ Rainer, pg. 105

whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.”⁶⁰

The concept of Ubuntu states that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself. This is no different than God's conception of "church" or God's statement about Adam that "it is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18). We are meant to be together and we are meant to be *for* one another. Millennials, victims of more divorce than any other generation, seem to understand this better than other generations.

"Well, why are they always on their phones, then?" you ask. Don't mistake a different form of communication as a *lack* of communication. Even though Millennials do many relationships through screens, that doesn't mean they're not unsocial. This is the social media generation. Granted, it's relationships at their personal convenience, but really every generation has done that to some extent. Millennials are by no means impersonal. In fact, if anything, they are radically transparent...online.

The point is that relationships are more important to them than almost anything. They just cultivate these relationships using technology more than previous generations. When people from older generations make comments about "no substitute for face-to-face meetings" or the like, Millennials don't just not understand, they disagree.

Because of their relational nature, especially one cultivated by technology, churches that can help Millennials improve existing relationships or foster new, meaningful relationships will be more appealing. Moreover, if you can get this to happen by leveraging modern technology, even better. Warning: Don't use technology to be cool. That's counterproductively uncool. Use it only because it's simply *better*.

Talk About Sex...Positively

Of the several hundred Millennials I've talked to fairly privately about their lives, most of them Christian or formerly so, almost none had conversations with their parents about sex during adolescence. For that matter, other topics that tend to occupy young brains in addition to sex – money, career, friends, identity, meaning of life – extremely few of the Millennials I've spoken with had these important conversations with people who loved them, who were the primary caretakers nurturing their relationships with God. I don't know a single young adult who hasn't struggled with the question of "how far is too far" in dating relationships and yet I'm still waiting to meet more than a handful of young adults who had highly productive conversations with his/her parent(s) about this. It's almost as if Satan has thoroughly damaged this gift of God merely by the threat of "awkward conversation."

Consequently, young adults have been left to base their evaluations of such issues, to form their perceptions, based on peers, music, television, movies, the internet, and media...the ways secular teens form their perceptions.

⁶⁰ Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 1999, and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wZtfqZ271w#t=162>

Granted, many of these young adults were aware that “sex outside of marriage is wrong.” Significantly fewer, however, were aware that “sex *inside* of marriage is a beautiful, God-glorifying thing.” The idea that God invented sex and designed humans as sexual beings seems odd to many young adults, unfortunately even Christian ones.

As far as young people being products of the environments in which they grow up, including sexually, I’m not sure exactly what we can do. But sympathetically acknowledging the difficulty of the extraordinary influx of hormones in young adulthood, teaching a proper theology of sex, and helping Millennials understand that the promises of extramarital sexual activity are Satanic lies that ruin relationships, both with other humans and your relationship with God...this would be a good place to start.

Socratic Learning Experience

Millennials are the generation that has access to any and all information. They can Wikipedia their way into biometrics, bomb-making, or Buddhism. In other words, they have plenty of places from which they can get information, and therefore they don’t need you to be dispensers of information per se. They need your help discerning between conflicting information.

This creates a drastic shift in learning. A generation or two ago, a minister was able to say, “Thus sayeth the Lord,” and his congregation would swallow it whole. Not so with Millennials. Millennials will challenge you on that, reasoning, “Who are you to say what the Lord says?! The Catholic priest says this. The Baptist minister says that. The Lutheran pastor says a third thing. And for that matter, the Jewish rabbi and the Dalai Lama don’t agree with any of you.” All of these individuals claim spiritual authority. But who holds the truth?

It is simply not enough to teach a Millennial the way something is, you have to *show* them. You have to take them down a journey of spiritual exploration, and you had better maintain a delicate balance – both a humility that leads you to listen attentively to their thoughts and concerns AND a passionate “I’d lose my life for this” conviction about where you currently stand. You forfeit your audience if you make a mistake on either side.

Connect Service To Evangelism

For better or worse, many young adults believe that evangelism *must* be connected to service on behalf of others. Many new studies coming out suggest that Millennials are significantly more inclined than their parents were to volunteer for causes perceived as important.

Wendy Spencer, CEO of the Corporation of National and Community Service says,

"We're on the crux of something big, because these Millennials are going to take this spirit of giving and wanting to change communities and they're going to become parents soon. I am very encouraged by what we're seeing."⁶¹

Millennials are so skeptical, and sniff out hypocrisy so readily, that they will adamantly reject any love and forgiveness *talk* that isn’t genuinely reinforced by a selfless, serving *walk*. To them, action

⁶¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2014/12/29/us/politics/ap-us-ap-poll-young-volunteers.html? r=0>

must provide shading to the beauty of word. And lest someone think this smacks of Social Gospel ideology, let's not become so jaded against social causes that we forget the emphasis that both Christ and the early Christians put on social concern. Historian Rodney Stark describes how such service by Christians led to interest in the Christian faith in the early years of Christianity...

“alien to paganism was the notion that because God loves humanity, Christians cannot please God unless they love one another. Indeed, as God demonstrates his love through sacrifice, humans must demonstrate their love through sacrifice on behalf of one another.”⁶²

Further related, a whopping total of 96 percent of Millennials believe that they will someday “accomplish something great.”⁶³ That's right – 96 PERCENT! Here's the catch though – while previous generations may have defined greatness in terms of personal wealth, power, and fame, that's not how Millennials see it. They still want the money, but their end game, at least from their own mouths, is a greater good for humanity. They'd like to sponsor a camp or build wells with clean water for kids in Africa. The generation that's concerned about things like carbon footprints is very conscious of leaving a positive impact on the world. Without question, this is something churches will want to tap into – Millennials want to *live out* the gospel, especially when it comes to social causes.

Be Sensitive To Their Tolerant Disposition

Okay. Okay. Yes, we all know Millennials have work to do on their problem with moral relativism. But before immediately correcting their inconsistent and illogical attempts at morality, let's start with a positive – these young adults are eager to find a point of commonality rather than a point of contention. This is drastically different from previous generations. Many Christians and Christian churches in the twentieth century largely defined their faith and denominational affiliation on the basis of what they were *not*, e.g. a Lutheran was *not* a Catholic because..., a Baptist was *not* a Lutheran because... Certainly such doctrinal differences are serious and at some point in time need to be worked through, but Millennials don't want to start there. Older WELS members often *do* appear to.

So it's worth reminding ourselves that statements of inclusion are important to communicating the gospel clearly. Paul says, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:28) John says, “This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.” (1 John 4:2) Jesus himself says, “whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.” (John 5:24) These are clear statements of gospel *inclusion*. The gospel is so overwhelmingly inclusive that it works for EVERYONE. It's intrinsically inclusive. So let's not be too quick to stomp out a good, but often misguided trait of Millennials.

Rather, for confronting a misguided common belief in culture – in this case, the native tolerance of Millennials – I would prefer to approach it with the methodology that Timothy Keller proposes:

⁶² Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, pg. 86

⁶³ Rainer, pg. 16

“Our premises must be drawn wholly from the Bible, yet we will always find some things in a culture’s beliefs that are roughly true, things on which we can build our critique. We will communicate something like this: “You see this ‘A’ belief you have? The Bible says the same thing – so we agree. However if ‘A’ is true, then why do you not believe ‘B’? The Bible teaches ‘B,’ and if ‘A’ is true, then it is not right, fair, or consistent for you to reject ‘B.’ If you believe this – how can you not believe that?” We reveal inconsistencies in the cultural beliefs and assumptions about reality. With the authority of the Bible we allow one part of the culture – along with the Bible – to critique another part. The persuasive force comes from basing our critique on something we can affirm within our culture.”⁶⁴

So, for instance, on the issue of tolerance, it works like this: What if someone says, “I think you’re being intolerant – and therefore, unloving – of other beliefs and other Christians by not (e.g.) allowing them to commune with us.” At that point what you do is say that you agree that the gospel does promote radical, almost otherworldly, inclusiveness. However, tolerance of beliefs has nothing to do with it. In fact, by saying that I’m being “narrow-minded” or “intolerant,” you’re being just as intolerant of my beliefs as you claim I’m being of the beliefs of others. Neither of us is more or less tolerant than the other. BOTH of us are claiming authoritative spiritual insight. At that point, you’ve both affirmed their desire for a good, gospel-flavored attitude, but corrected their misguided application of what *is* or *is not* loving.⁶⁵ This affords you the opportunity to then walk them through 1 Corinthians 10-11, at which point they’ll be impressed to see how loving and compassionate the idea of close Communion really is. If you come in with, “Well, that’s just wrong” you’ll run into that Nietzschean Millennial distrust of authority and institutional power plays.

Affirm the good. Gently walk them through what is incorrect.

Redemption and Renovation, Not Avoidance

As mentioned previously under the “Judgmental/Exclusive” section, Millennials don’t like the idea of running away from the world and hiding. They’d much rather enter, impact, and improve existing institutions. It’s not as though there isn’t historical precedent for such an idea either. Rodney Stark again reasons that the early church, instead of creating their own institutions, were known for joining and enriching existing ones.⁶⁶

In other words, Christians today have the resources to build private schools, make Christian pop music and Christian movies and Christian TV and radio stations, and basically mirror and

⁶⁴ Timothy Keller, *Center Church*, pg. 125

⁶⁵ Perhaps a better example of this methodology, I’m constantly using this teaching technique on the issue of Evolution. Most young adults operate with “macro-evolutionary beliefs” since that’s what they learned in their science textbooks. However, most young adults also often have particular compassion for the oppression of human rights around the world. So, what I’ll do is establish that such human sensitivity (an ‘A’ belief for them) is a wonderful attribute, but gently point out how this is inconsistent with their ‘B’ belief of evolution. Evolution is predicated on the idea of “survival of the fittest” and “the strong eat the weak.” So, if you believe in macro-evolution, you cannot logically say that it is “wrong” for a stronger country in the Middle East to devour a weaker country. That’s merely the advancement of the species. See, at that point, their ‘A’ belief trumps their ‘B’ belief, and they feel compelled to correct the cognitive dissonance. I don’t know that I’ve ever explained macro-evolution to a young adult that way and had them not say, “Hmmm. That’s interesting.”

⁶⁶ Stark, pg. 55

Christianize nearly everything we see in the world. Millennials appear more interested in popping that bubble and working to better the world, the institutions, and the people around us.

What implications this has for our churches and church body is hard to say. We have a long history of privatized schools. Perhaps the main issue that comes up today regarding the continuance of this system is birth rate. If our church body doesn't grow, our schools *will* shrink due to decreasing birth rates. A separate issue, however, is that Millennials are probably going to be even more difficult to convince that such exclusion is necessary...or good. And when it comes to the survival of an institution, as far as recruitment is concerned, leadership is going to have to be very careful to not cross a line of binding consciences to what Christian nurture and education *must* look like.

Finally, another important aspect of this topic is the realm of vocation. As already mentioned, countless Christians have difficulty attaching meaning to their current work lives in the secular world. In fact, it's not uncommon for adult Christians, once they experience some period of spiritual growth, to take that as God's hand moving them into fulltime public ministry. Their current employment is not viewed as spiritual enough. While public ministry *may* be a legitimate option and noble pursuit for some adults, for others, it is not. Adults need to be able to think through what infusing their work environment with gospel grace would look like – patience, mercy, forgiveness, generosity, etc.

Millennials prefer to redeem what exists if possible, not avoid it and create a separate alternative.

Make Christianity as Dramatic As It Is

The next generation of Christians doesn't appear to want *easy*. They seem to want their lives attached to a meaningful narrative that involves high expectations, sacrifice, and surrender. Would you expect less from a generation that was largely shaped in the movie theatre? Think about it – what was the last movie you saw (or book you read) where the main character had low expectations, always played it safe, and sacrificed nothing to advance any causes? Who would care about such a character? You wouldn't. And yet that's exactly how a younger generation perceives many Christians today – boringly safe.

Contrast this with the early Christians who were tossed to the lions, took care of the sick, shared everything with the poor but shared their beds with one or none. In the ancient document, *The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus*, we read about the early Christians:

They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all.⁶⁷

Christianity spread in the Roman Empire because the Holy Spirit was not only working through gospel proclamation, but also because the Spirit was attracting people to that message by having gospel effects visualized in the day-to-day lives of the early Christians. That was the same

⁶⁷ <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/diognetus-roberts.html>

“Institution of Church” as we have today, but arguably more beautiful than what we often see from churches today. No?

This high stakes drama, sacrifice, and risk-taking all actually fits in quite well with how Millennials think. The nonchalant, slacker “whatever” attitude of 80s/90s Buster teens is largely gone. Millennials care about stuff and aren’t afraid to tell you. They want to use any status and influence they gain to do good. They have a true sense of ownership in making the world a better place. Churches should be affirming this desire and tapping into the healing power of the gospel, explaining how Jesus too came here not to condemn the world, but ultimately to work for the betterment of human existence (John 3:17; 2 Pet. 3:13).

Put differently, if you are spending a majority of your time as a church communicating where you’re at in your unified budget, expounding on the dangers of interdenominational prayer fellowship, and debating the merits of various worship styles...all while Coptic Christians in Egypt are being beheaded, you’re going to lose your Millennials, or at the very least turn off any potential new ones. The Christian faith is not a line item, it’s a lifeline, and it needs to be communicated with every ounce of drama and passion that it deserves.

Update Catechism Curriculum to Include Apologetics

Atheistic thought never really gained traction in Europe until the French Revolution and Age of Enlightenment. Consequently, aside from giving some time to the Natural Knowledge of God, Luther’s Catechisms aren’t really major resources for Christian Apologetics.

With the rise of New Atheism⁶⁸ and increasingly secular academics, the Christian Church is in desperate need of good apologetic study. While the research is debatable as to the exact percentages⁶⁹, there is no denying that “university professor” is one of the most atheist professions in our country. When young, impressionable adults then enter into college and sit before men and women who are well-respected in their given fields and the students find these professional educators making disparaging comments about the accuracy of Scripture, they feel ill-equipped to defend their faith. I’ve received countless texts, emails, and Facebook messages over the years from college students who were asking for clarification on biblical stances, because their professor had made a comment blatantly disregarding the Bible in their psychology, sociology, philosophy, biology, chemistry, geology, astronomy, etc. courses.

I have no doubt in my mind that apologetics is a more pressing need for God’s people in the twenty-first century, post-Enlightenment western world than in sixteenth century Germany. We need to build some of this into curriculums starting at an early age. Fortunately, we don’t need to reinvent

⁶⁸ In short, New Atheism (led by voices like Richard Dawkins, the now deceased Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Daniel Dennett) is “new” in the sense that whereas atheism in the past merely said that God didn’t exist, New Atheism is saying that organized religion is dangerous to society and should be eradicated, at least from the public arena. For more insights and details on its impact, check out Adam Lee, “Rise of the New Atheists,”

http://www.salon.com/2012/07/30/should_atheists_make_an_alliance_with_religious_progressives/

⁶⁹ Amarnath Amarasingam, “Are American College Professors Religious?” http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amarnath-amarasingam/how-religious-are-america_b_749630.html

the wheel on a good portion of it. Ken Ham's group at *Answers in Genesis* is phenomenal.⁷⁰ And they have an enormous collection of age appropriate study materials. Let's start there.

Willingness To Change

All of my recommendations here require a willingness to change. Now, any Christian who truly knows the gospel understands the gospel must never change. To the degree that you believe it can or should, by definition, you're pushing yourself outside of God's Kingdom. However, in proportion to seeing that saving gospel clearly, you also understand that everything but the gospel *can*, and sometimes *must*, change. If you don't understand that, you're guilty of the manmade religion that the Apostle Paul so readily condemns. (Col. 2:16-17; Gal. 2:11-21)

Change is difficult for religious people. Sinful hearts tend to self-righteously latch onto certain practices, certain clothes, certain patterns of saying things, certain music, certain programs, certain systems, and then condemn all that is different. Our sinful hearts do this because they are hostile to Christ (Rom. 8:7). By nature, we want to justify ourselves before God apart from Christ. As a result, we make up rules, we do our best to keep them, and we condemn all who don't abide by these rules to the same extent that we do. Then, in our minds, we are, relatively speaking, *closer* to God than others. The subconscious, self-righteous goal all along was to bring ourselves to God apart from Christ. The motor was unbelief. This was the same engine that powered the Pharisees. (Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7)

Again, Millennials are almost perfectly calibrated to embrace the beautiful freedom of forms that the gospel presents.⁷¹ Millennials understand that change is simply a natural part of life. Accelerating technology means that communication, organizations, and life itself are ever-changing. But the essence of humanity stays the same. Consequently, the gospel is brilliantly BOTH non-negotiable AND tremendously flexible.

As Christians, we should reflect that in our churches too.

An Attempt To Practice What I Preach

I am one of three pastors at a multisite church, *Resurrection & Life Lutheran* in Rochester, MN.

Over the past several years, I've gathered information from a variety of influential churches within Rochester (non-WELS) who seem to be making concerted efforts to reach Millennials. When I've asked what's been tried, they've suggested many items I've read elsewhere – small groups, studies tailored to Millennial interests, and special services with a more Millennial feel (i.e. heavy video content, dimmed lighting, modern music that uses a large band, etc.). The churches reported varying degrees of success with the methodology. However, one consistent seemed to be that they were more successful at reaching young families, less successful at reaching singles, who tend to bounce from church to church, or even to reach young newlyweds. That last bit sounds *relatively* WELS – once young adult couples have a child and realize their decisions affect another soul, this

⁷⁰ <https://answersingenesis.org>

⁷¹ Yale professor Lamin Sanneh has some great insights on this in *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West*. Raised in Gambia, he makes the case that the reason Christianity is burgeoning in Africa today is precisely because, in contrast to other faiths like Islam, the Christian faith didn't de-Africanize the continent. Rather, it enriched Africa's pre-existing forms.

tends to be a jolt to their desire to pursue church involvement. This is nothing really new. What's different is that Millennials, for a variety of reasons, are waiting longer to get married and have kids, if they do that *at all*. And even if they do, they're simply not "coming back to church" at the rate previous generations did. This is an issue irrespective of denomination.

When we started our second site over four years ago, truth be told, I was a bit terrified.

We structured a second campus with, in my opinion, a bit of a "Goldilocks" feel to it, i.e. everything was designed to be "just right" for people searching for a church. Our second site had a highly desirable worship time (9:30am). It was a casual atmosphere with great coffee, comfortable seats, eager musicians who played a combination of traditional and contemporary songs, and the amenities of a new facility. Sixty to eighty of our most active, exuberant members claimed that second site as "home" and were eager to welcome visitors. On top of all that, we built an indoor children's playplace right into our second site, available throughout the week to members and the community alike, which has been incredibly successful in getting people from our city onto our campus.

"Sounds great," you say. So, why was I a bit terrified? The reason is...I was serving primarily at the *original* site, not the second site. Here we had built a facility and tailored it to appeal to people in their twenties and thirties, the most common age of those seeking a church. It stood in contrast to our more traditionally WELS site only five miles away. For about a year I was filled with panic, feeling like I was constantly fighting upstream, that the deck was stacked against our more traditional site. I prayed about this A LOT. Literally, every night I prayed about this exact topic. And I had almost no suggestions to offer to God either (which is unusual for me). I simply could not see how Resurrection would survive after creating a nearby option that would seemingly appeal more to worship visitors. I started tracking worship attendance very carefully, counting "worship units." Single adults, married couples, singles with kids, and couples with kids, all counted as just one worship unit. I divided worship attenders into three categories – people in their 20s & 30s, 40s & 50s, and 60s+.

Fast forward three years. In that span, the 20s & 30s age bracket (again, *by far* your largest segment of worship visitors) has now become our largest demographic group at Resurrection (see Fig. 2).

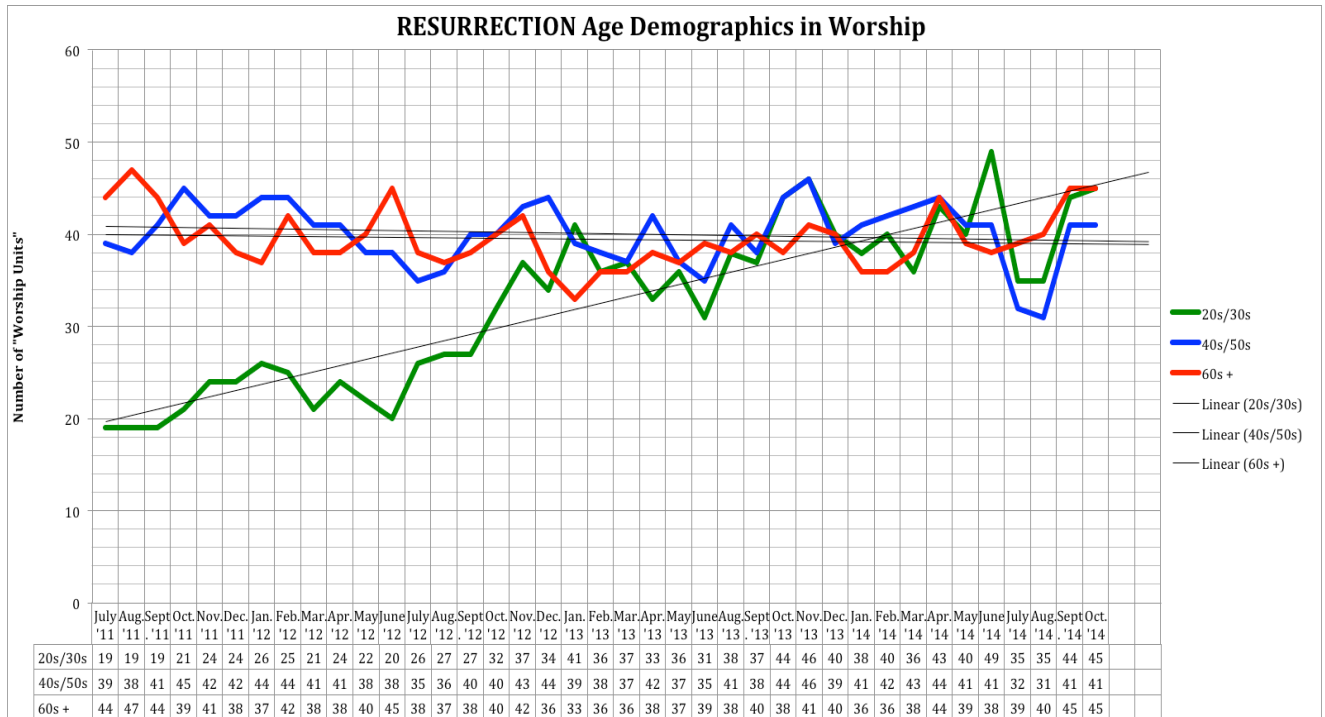


Figure 2

What happened? How did we not only replace the attenders at our original site, but actually get comparatively younger than we were before? Well, the only thing I *know* is that God’s grace is powerful. And God hears prayers. Beyond that, I can only speculate. I did, however, poll the Millennials at Resurrection and got more than enough responses to be representative.

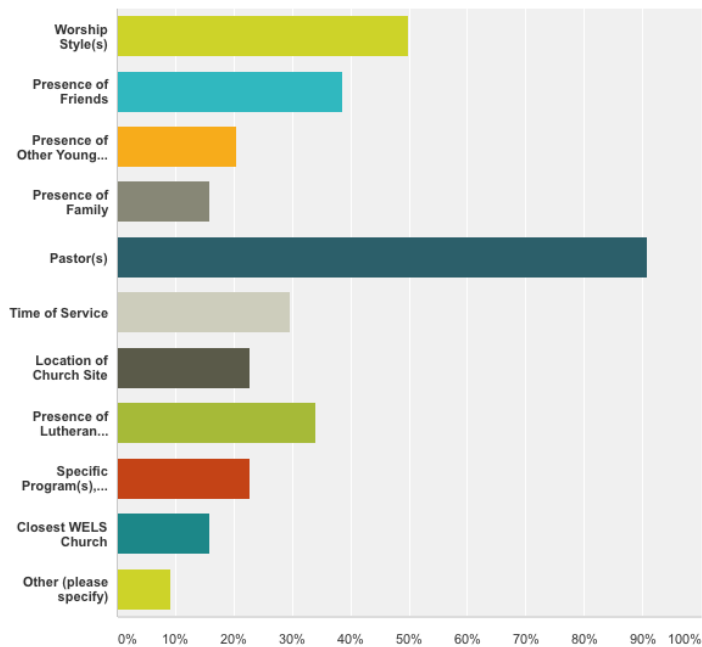


Figure 3

It would appear that the items that most strongly affected the Millennial-aged attenders were relationships and variety (our worship style in recent years has varied a decent amount from week to week). (see Fig. 3)

You might be surprised that something like “theological integrity” wasn’t an option in the polling. That was because there are other WELS church options in the area. In other words, theology, while of utmost importance in these Millennials’ decision for a church, it didn’t fully account for the choice of attending Resurrection.

So far as I could tell from the comments, it’s nearly half and half as far as

worship style preference. In other words, some feel quite strongly that we should be more traditional and reverent and others feel quite strongly that we should be more contemporary and casual. So, amongst Millennials, those feelings coexist, but the final outcome seems to be that all appreciate *some* variety. At our church, we talk quite frequently about not becoming sinfully dogmatic in areas we are free, that this is as serious an offense as taking away from God's Word (Rev. 22:18; Deut. 4:2). And we spend time explaining *why* humans get so self-righteous. As a result, people have become quite open, accepting of the beauty of variety.

Overall, the comments that survey respondents gave largely supported the high premium that Millennials place on relationships.

For instance, many responses included thoughts like:

"Through all this I have formed friendships and bonds and even though life is busy during the week with different schedules, I enjoy seeing fellow believers and friends on Sunday...it is encouraging to know there is a support system when I need to talk to a fellow Christian friend."

"I was pleasantly surprised to learn about a living and active group for young adults."

"Our family chooses to go to Resurrection mainly because of the connections with friends that we have there."

"Most of my friends are young adults without kids that attend Resurrection."

"Resurrection has a very welcoming group of young people and it has been refreshing to worship with this group and make some meaningful friendships from it. The lasting friendships have stemmed from the small Bible Study groups that have been formed."

"We have a core group of friends that we enjoy worshipping and visiting with..."

"I like the small groups..."

"I chose Resurrection because it seems to have quite a few young people."

Seemingly, nothing attracts relationally-minded young people like...young people.

Furthermore, if we had done a better job in the past several years of strategically fostering relationships, offering additional levels of variety, implementing new technology, and promoting more social causes that young adults could get behind, I wouldn't be surprised if the statistics would have reflected even greater change.

The bottom line is that my congregation is living proof that a fifty-plus-year-old site with several factors working against it and few Millennials can still reach Millennials. I'd personally recommend starting with prayer and offering God no suggestions.

Final Thought

While I've spent a great deal of time studying, thinking about, writing about, and praying about this topic of ministering to Millennials, I hope you have not gotten the impression that I think I have everything figured out. I don't. Not even close.

What I *do* have is a deeper appreciation for the brilliance of a gospel that "works" at every level for every generation. Imagine a Savior so unalterable, so uncompromising, and yet so culturally flexible that a large segment from every generation in the past 2000 years has considered him their best friend. I count myself as one. And to think, he invites us to come along on the journey of introducing him, THE Answer, to a generation of people who've got questions.

Most Helpful Resources

There's no shortage of resources available to assist with understanding Millennials. The 10 *most* helpful to me were:

Bass, D. B. (2012). *Christianity After Religion. The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Hess, S. Millennials: Who They Are & Why We Hate Them. *TEDxSF*. San Francisco: TED Talks.

Keller, T. (2012). *Center Church. Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Kinnaman, D. (2007). *unchristian. What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity...And Why It Matters*. Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks.

Kinnaman, D. (2011). *You Lost Me. Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church...And Rethinking Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks.

Lyons, G. (2010). *The NEXT Christians. Seven Ways You Can Live the Gospel and Restore the World*. Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah.

Pew Research Center. (2010). *Pew Research Center Social Trends And Demographics*. Retrieved 2014, from [pewsocialtrends.org: http://pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/10/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf](http://pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/10/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf)

Rainer, T. S., & Rainer, J. W. (2011). *the millennials. Connecting to America's Largest Generation*. Nashville, TN: Lifeway Research.

Twenge, J. M. (2007). *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled - And More Miserable Than Ever Before*. New York, NY: Atria.

White, J. E. (2014). *Rise of the Nones. Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated*. Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks.