

Christianity Isn't Dying,  
Millennials Aren't the Problem,  
And the Future Is Bright

# Generational



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LEADING ACROSS GENERATIONS™  
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# GENERATIONAL IQ

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- What is Generational Intelligence? The study of how persons in different generations experience reality and relate to one another.
- Increase your generational IQ in order to avoid generational fault finding!
- When you were born affects your experience of God, friends, family, and Church.
- *“We need to understand those differences – rather than attempting to maneuver others into seeing things our way...”*

## THE KIDS ARE ALL SIMILAR

Now that youth groups are full of Generation Z (those born between 1999 and 2015), Barna Group found their top three barriers to faith are strikingly similar to older non-Christians.

	<b>Gen Z</b>	<b>Millennials</b>	<b>Gen X</b>	<b>Boomers</b>
<b>A good God wouldn't allow evil or suffering.</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Christians are hypocrites.</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Science refutes too much of the Bible.</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>22%</b>

# OVERVIEW of the GENERATIONS

- Traditionalists (born before 1945)
  - Mantra: *If you build it, they will come...*
- Baby Boomers (born 1946 – 1964)
  - Mantra: *It's all about me (greedy, materialistic, ambitious).*
- Generation Xers (born 1965 – 1980)
  - Mantra: *True for you, but not true for me...*
- Millennials (born 1981 – 2001)
  - Mantra: *Be Good, Feel Good, Live Your Life (God is Watching)*
- Generation “Z” (born about 1999-2015, and *not* discussed in *G-IQ*)
  - Mantra: ? (Multi-ethnic experience, and seem to be prioritizing career and success over families)

# TRADITIONALISTS

Born before 1945

## Strengths:

- They cooperate
- They serve with lower expectations
- They give financially

## Temptations:

- They struggle with purposeless retirement
- They cling to the past and lecture

# BABY BOOMERS

Born 1946 – 1964

## Strengths = Temptations:

- Hyper-individualism
- Focus on self
- Church hopping
- Psychology

# GENERATION Xers

Born 1965 – 1980

## Strengths

- They reclaim the priority of community
  - ....*moved the focus from the individual back to the community*
- They reclaim the spiritual in all of life
- Serve others in their daily lives/jobs – not just through church
- They reclaim the value of life and family over work (“life-work” balance)

## Temptations:

- They build their own truth
- Respect what Jesus did—but not that Jesus was the truth for all
- They are cynical

# MILLENNIALS

Born 1981 – 2001

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uo0KidDJr1c>

## Strengths:

- They want meaning: Want to make a noticeable impact.
- They want authentic: Who is the real person behind the happy face?
- They want teams: *“They wish society and the church would quit fighting over differences and work together.”*

# MILLENNIALS

Born 1981 – 2001

## Temptations:

- They miss contradictions in their morality: *The new unpardonable sin is for one person to judge another person's moral behavior.*
- They miss the power and importance of the church: There's little need for local church!
- They are tempted by a hacked version of Christianity: ***If you get nothing else, you must get this – it's that dangerous – Be Good, Feel Good, Live Your Life (God is Watching)***

# Hacked Christianity?

- Millennials live in a world where it is good to be “spiritual, but not religious,” because...
- Religions—including Christianity—are seen as intolerant, hypocritical, and irrelevant.
- A careful survey of more than 3,000 Millennials revealed a common core of five beliefs:
  1. A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.

# Hacked Christianity?

2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in a person's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

# “Be good, feel good, live your life (God is Watching)”

- Be Good

- *Millennials are convinced that the only way for people to get along is if no one has strong convictions that their beliefs are truly true.*
- *What's good for one may not be good for another ...*
- *“...then we see the good we should do and want to do but can't do. Our unfulfilled desires are too strong. They own us.”*

- Feel Good

- *God comforts and serves us rather than us serving God.*

- Live Your Life (God is watching)

- *God is seen as a teacher on the playground who steps in only when things get out of control.*

# How can we respond?

- Agree with them when we can...
- Listen more, talk less...
  - You don't have to have all the answers
  - From the book "*Churchless*:" Millennials are leaving churches because: Christianity is too shallow, churches seem antagonistic to science, and the exclusivity of Christianity is a turnoff.
- Ask questions, talk less... talk less... talk less...
- Be a person they can think out loud with.

# Will Christianity really disappear in three generations?

Reason #1: No, the research doesn't bear it out...

Reason #2: Jesus said it won't ...

- Mathew 16:18 – And I [Jesus] tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it

# Will Christianity really disappear in three generations?

Challenge #1: We have to connect with five generations.

Challenge #2: The “nones” are growing.

- *...churches are too messed up to hold much value for them personally*
- *...they will not come to our churches and find us. We will have to meet them and engage them in spiritual conversations where they are at*

Challenge #3: The millennials who have left the church may not come back.

- ...less patience with institutions
- ...less likely to be married
- ...waiting longer to have kids
- ...think Christians are too judgmental
- ...turned off by Christians in politics

# Why won't younger people come to *my* church?

## **Wrong Question!**

Better question: What will we need to do differently to reach the younger generations?

- Option 1: Change the church now (best option for most churches)
  - Although often the answer is not yet – congregation isn't ready, haven't discussed the right questions, don't have the right staff or structure.
- Option 2: Grow old together, and continue to serve
- Option 3: Pretend you can reach all five generations
  - ...never recommended

# Reaching Gen Xers

- Help Gen Xers find family in the church
- Discover whether you need more interactive worship
- Show how Jesus taught a better worldview than “true for you, but not for me.”
- Get comfortable with technology
- Get out of the building

# Reaching Millennials

- Become the older friend
- Use humor
- Help them understand the whys behind the commandments
- Teach deeper, and don't skip the hard questions
  - *We have multiyear tracks in school systems called "college prep" so our kids will succeed academically, but few churches provide college prep for their intellectual and spiritual success*
- *Target: Be good, Feel good, Live your life (God is watching)*

# What am I supposed to do now that it doesn't feel like my church anymore?

Traditionalists and boomer reactions to change: “They are afraid that if they change to reach the younger people, the church they love will be lost.”

1. Give your church back to Jesus
2. Connect with Jesus if it doesn't feel like your church anymore
  - Who is our target audience?
3. Sign up for whatever Jesus has planned for your next thirty years
  - Build a purposeful retirement
  - Look for ways to use your skills as well as your gifts
4. Help your church figure out second adulthood
  - *So don't quit leading, lead from the side*

# Why we need each other

- Ask: Is this generational or is this scriptural?

- *“.....when we don’t understand the generations, we overreact to the small things, ignore the big things, and do the wrong things.”*

Ephesians 4:1-3: I [Paul] urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

- *Humbly turn on the lights*
- *Gently listen to their stories*
- *Patiently bear with them*
  - *“...hoping that another generation will finally “get it” and change. But when we understand generations, we are the ones who finally “get it.”*
  - *“If you do it with humility and gentleness, it won’t sound as though you’ve made yourself the absolute standard of truth. And you might open someone up to finding the God who is the absolute standard of truth.”*

# Wisdom from George MacDonald (1824-1905)

*“We have yet a work to do, my friends, but a work we shall never do aright after ceasing to understand the new generation. We are not the men, neither shall wisdom die with us. The Lord hath not forsaken his people because the young ones do not think just as the old ones choose. The Lord has something fresh to tell them, and is getting them ready to receive his message. When we are out of sympathy with the young, then I think our work in this world is over.”*