

LIBERTY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

RESCUING THE MILLENNIALS; FOUR ESSENTIAL LESSONS LEARNED AND EIGHT  
KEY PRINCIPLES TO RECLAIMING THIS GENERATION

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

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March, 2015



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## **ABSTRACT**

### **RESCUING THE MILLENNIALS; FOUR ESSENTIAL LESSONS LEARNED AND EIGHT KEY PRINCIPLES TO RECLAIMING THIS GENERATION**

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Recent trends reveal the decline in church attendance among younger generations, with the Millennials. The purpose of this project is to develop a Christian model that will offer churches practical steps and instructions on how to rescue this generation. Research will be conducted through surveys and interviews with sixty senior pastors, young adult pastors, and Millennials between the age of 18 and 29 years old to ascertain relevant data. This research will provide four essential lessons learned and eight key principles to reclaiming the Millennial generation.

Abstract length: 133 words.

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to the memory of my parents, James and Sylvia Hill who taught me the importance of academic excellence. Thank you to Dr. Charlie Davidson and Dr. David Hirschman for sharing your expertise and leadership during this thesis project experience. I want to say a special thank you to my pastor, Reverend Patrick J. Walker and the New Macedonia Baptist Church family for your assistance and continued prayers. I would like to thank my siblings Michael (deceased), Gary, Anthony, and Judy (deceased) for your unending love and support. Thank you to other family members and friends for your inspiration and prayers. I owe my greatest gratitude to my husband Joseph, son Aaron and grandson Isaiah for your faithful support, encouragement and love during my entire Doctor of Ministry journey. Truly, I am thankful to Jesus Christ for His vision, guidance, and loving-kindness. Certainly without the Lord, none of this would have been possible. To God be the glory!

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The future of the 21<sup>st</sup> century church is not bright because of the tremendous changes that have occurred over recent years. There has been much conversation about Americans and their lack of participation in the formalized church. The Gallup Organization reports, “Only 44 percent of Americans have confidence in the church or organized religion.”<sup>1</sup>

Throughout this country, church attendance has become unpopular and membership has drastically decreased. According to surveys conducted by the American Church Research Project, more than 200,000 congregations have had a decline in attendance.<sup>2</sup> Over the past decades, decreasing attendance has been a common occurrence for many prominent denominations. This trend is holding true regardless of theology, worship style, denomination, or locale.<sup>3</sup> There was a time when the growth of church membership was identified by baptisms. For example, the Southern Baptist churches have experienced a drop in their baptisms by 100,000, which reflect a rate of 5.5 percent.<sup>4</sup> Even Roman Catholics, the nation’s second largest faith, have experienced a 3 percent decrease in baptisms.<sup>5</sup>

It has always been a normal practice for people in the American society to attend church and be familiar with Biblical principles. However, “real data confirms how drastically the moral,

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<sup>1</sup>Bruce Nolan, “Gallup reports new low in religious confidence,” *Religion News Service* (July 16, 2012) [www.religionnews.com/2012/07/16/gallup-reports-new-low](http://www.religionnews.com/2012/07/16/gallup-reports-new-low) (accessed November 29, 2014).

<sup>2</sup>Bob Allen, “SBC baptism, membership numbers fall,” *Baptist News Global* (June 6, 2013) <http://www.abpnews.com/ministry/organizations/item/8562> (accessed November 5, 2014).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

social and spiritual lives of Americans have changed and are changing.”<sup>6</sup> Consequently, many church doors have closed and pastors have resigned. Some popular mega-churches have lost their popularity because of high maintenance expenses for property and personnel. Due to social changes, people are beginning to challenge the essence of God and the purpose for the church. Thus, pastors are looking for new methods to revitalize their services and increase membership rolls.

Certainly, the American church and the future of Christianity are in a crisis. Therefore, it is important that a course of action be taken to ensure the survival of the church. In doing so, a question arises, “What must be done to revive the church and reach a dying world with the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?”

#### Statement of the Problem

Today, the problem exists where church membership and attendance of young adults is decreasing worldwide. This group of young adults is called the Millennials, who range between the ages of 18 and 29-years old. Specifically, the Barna Group conducted a study that revealed over the past 20 years there has been a 30 percent increase of U.S. adults who claim to be churchless.<sup>7</sup> This study also indicated that 59 percent of the Millennials who grew up in Christian churches are now leaving their faith or the church in their early twenties.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, there is an increase from 44 percent to 52 percent among Millennials who are churchless.<sup>9</sup> The most

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<sup>6</sup>George Barna and David Kinnaman, “Christian Leader Profile” (June 2013) [www.barna.org/dloads/christian-leader-profile](http://www.barna.org/dloads/christian-leader-profile) (accessed November 9, 2014).

<sup>7</sup>George Barna and David Kinnaman, “Three Spiritual Journeys of Millennials” (May 9, 2013) <https://www.barna.org/.../621-three-spiritual-journeys-of-millennials> (accessed November 10, 2014).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

alarming result is that 61 percent of today's Millennials, who were once active during their teen years, are now spiritually inactive.<sup>10</sup> The Pew Research Center polling reports that this is the highest percentage of religiously unaffiliated Americans reported in U.S. history.<sup>11</sup>

The Millennial Generation is embraced by a culture that has changed radically over the past decade. The Barna Group study shows that Millennials were once faithful yet still love Jesus, but are skeptical and resistant to Christianity.<sup>12</sup> They call themselves “spiritual but not religious.”<sup>13</sup> Certainly, this reflects a shift in the times. If issues are not addressed, the rate of churchlessness will continue to grow in America.

In years past, young adults would eventually reconnect with the church around the time they married and had children. However, today this is not the case. They are making significant life choices and determining their spiritual preferences while the church waits, possibly in vain.<sup>14</sup> David Kinnaman, of the Barna Group, indicates that the church is not prepared to adequately minister to the spiritual needs of the Millennials.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the church must get active in their efforts to address the current state of ministry. There is a need to come together, embrace a new way of “being the church,” and move forward to bridge the gap of generational disengagement. Hence, the purpose of this project is to develop a Christian training model that will prepare the church with practical principles to reclaim the Millennial Generation.

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<sup>10</sup>Barna, “Three Spiritual Journeys of Millennials.”

<sup>11</sup>Nolan, “Gallup reports new low in religious confidence.”

<sup>12</sup>Barna, “Three Spiritual Journeys of Millennials.”

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

### Statement of Limitations

The goal of this project is to offer a realistic design that will help the church be more informed about the trends and characteristics of the Millennial Generation. As previously indicated, the purpose of this study is to develop a training model for pastors, leaders, and congregants on strategic methods that will prepare them to reconnect with the Millennials. However, in this effort, the following issues will not be addressed because the subject matter is too broad. First, the project will not attempt to address church membership among any group other than the Millennial Generation. Second, this project will not evaluate the effectiveness of church programs designed for Millennials. Third, it will not attempt to develop a plan to reorganize the structure and/or programmatic elements of the church. Fourth, it is not the purpose of this project to design a new model for young adult ministry.

### Theoretical Basis for the Project

The theoretical basis for the project is the Bible, which is the governing authority for all things. As the church declines, it has shifted from God's original purpose. Today, the modern church experience is noted to be "shaped by lifeless rituals and held together by religious programs."<sup>16</sup> Many say that the head of the church has become a man instead of God.

Dr. Elmer Towns and Warren Bird in their book titled, *Into the Future* expressed the importance of the church experiencing the presence of the God.<sup>17</sup> They said that the church must "actively seek the Holy Spirit's direction and empowerment for daily life and ministry."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishers, 2008).

<sup>17</sup>Elmer Towns and Warren Bird, *Into the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2000), 5.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

Questions are asked about the absence of Millennials in the church. Henry Blackaby and the Church Growth movement affirm: “Find and join what God is doing. Know Him, Experience Him. Find His agenda for the church and life, and get plugged into it.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, progressive intervention is necessary to curtail the dilemma that is presently upon the church. It is time to get up, go back to Christian principles, and fight the spiritual battle of destruction. Hence, the Apostle Paul beckons the body of Christ in Romans:

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.<sup>20</sup>

The church community has lost its affection, love, and wholesomeness. “They are selfish, individualistic, and independent.”<sup>21</sup> Additionally, the church today is characterized as being dysfunctional and unhealthy. The church is as healthy as we are individually healthy.<sup>22</sup> For that reason it appears all churches have a bit of unhealthiness and are in desperate need of a healing Savior. Thus, Apostle Luke declared that healing occurs when the church fears the Lord. It is further substantiated in the book of Acts:

Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied. The body of Christ was delivered from bitterness and put into a place of rest. They began to enjoy peace and were elevated in faith and holiness.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Towns, *Into the Future*, 5.

<sup>20</sup>Romans 13:11-14. Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible references in this paper are from the New King James Version (NKJV) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2009).

<sup>21</sup>Viola, *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity*, 102.

<sup>22</sup>Ron Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is...How to Lie the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 1.

<sup>23</sup>Acts 9:31



Moreover, the healing will permeate when the people of God become humble and seek God through prayer and repentance. The church needs healing in order to minister effectively to others. In 2 Chronicles 7:14 it is written, “If my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”<sup>24</sup>

The lesson of preparation found in Luke 15 is designed to foster healing and restore compassion back to the church. When the church is set free, it will be open and receptive to receive Millennials back home as the father did with the Prodigal Son. This story highlights several pertinent factors that can be employed by the leadership. First, the father in this story represents Jesus Christ, who exemplifies love, forgiveness, and grace. The second point manifests when the father let his son go and blessed him with an inheritance. There is a season when people must be let go. At this point there is comfort in, “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”<sup>25</sup>

Second, when the son had been abused by the world, he realized that life at home was better. He decided to return to seek forgiveness from his father. “Now, I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing.”<sup>26</sup>

Next, when the father saw his son from a distance he embraced him with a great kiss because of his love for his son. The first words that the son uttered to his father were that he had

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<sup>24</sup>2 Chronicles 7:14

<sup>25</sup>Philippians 1:6.

<sup>26</sup>2 Corinthians 7:9.

sinned against him and his heavenly father. The father was so overjoyed with the return of his lost son decided to celebrate. The Scripture states, “Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”<sup>27</sup> He did not scold him for wasting his inheritance, but just loved him. He gave him the best food and crowned him as a king. The elder son that was at home became upset when he heard that this brother had returned. “And he said to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.”<sup>28</sup>

The anger and jealousy of the elder son is similar to the Pharisees and many Christians today. The Pharisees were very religious and did not believe in forgiveness. Nevertheless, it is written, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”<sup>29</sup> Most importantly, when the church begins to walk in the fullness of God, the Millennials will also experience a transformation of love and become more like Christ.

Ephesians 4:32 states, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”<sup>30</sup> The church is called to be real and authentic. This entails being kind, forgiving and loving one another as Christ did. Also, as the Father loved his son and all of mankind, so is the church expected to do the same. The Scripture noted in Jeremiah 31:3 “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you.”<sup>31</sup> God never stops loving his people and because of this, He will bring others back into the

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<sup>27</sup>Luke 15:10.

<sup>28</sup>Luke 15:31-33.

<sup>29</sup>Romans 3:23.

<sup>30</sup>Ephesians 4:32.

<sup>31</sup>Jeremiah 31:3.

kingdom and restore the church. As Christians, it is necessary to be crucified on a daily basis so that God can do effective work within us.

Also, as the Millennials are approached, it is very important to gain an understanding about who they are and what makes them who they are. To this point, the church has been possessed of tradition, close-minded with doctrine, and stubborn in their ways. Consequently, if the church continues with a lackadaisical attitude, it will die. Hosea writes, “My people perish from lack of knowledge.”<sup>32</sup> What has happened to the Millennials? Where are they today? Were they ever really saved? Has the church caused them to leave their faith? What can be done as the church body to win the Millennials back? In order to move forward, these questions must be addressed.

Finally, according to Rick Warren’s book, the Emerging Church, the church needs to find new ways to become more relevant to this generation without compromising the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>33</sup> He states that the church needs to “concentrate on people, not building, on community, not programs, on scripture study, not showy worship.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, the church must open up their hearts so that God can release revival in the land. Conclusively, the Bible and theoretical findings will serve to answer questions and lay a foundation of spiritual direction for the 21<sup>st</sup> century church.

### Statement of Methodology

Chapter One: The Introduction will discuss the decline of church membership in America. The generation that shows the greatest decrease in attendance is the Millennials.

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<sup>32</sup>Hosea 4:6.

<sup>33</sup>Dan Kimball, *Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 2003).

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

Ironically, this generation is those who were raised in church, but are now leaving during their early twenties. This chapter not only shares the problem, but it also outlines areas of limitations that will not be included in the project. The Bible is the foundational theoretical basis that will be utilized. There are numerous Scriptures used, but the focus will be centered on 2 Chronicles. Here, the Lord calls the church to humility, prayer, and repentance for healing of the land.<sup>35</sup> The story of the Prodigal Son is found in Luke 9 also serves as a foundational witness. This story shows that even though the son went astray the father was forgiving and welcomed him back home with love and celebration.

Chapter Two presents the findings that resulted from a survey that was given to pastors, youth pastors, and Millennials. The objective of this survey is to ascertain membership statistics, ministry participation, and interest data of Millennials who attend church. This chapter will also include demographic information based on research of the Millennial Generation and their characteristic relationships with other generational groups. There will be a discussion of their views on religious institutions and the reasons why many have become churchless. Also covered in this chapter is a snapshot of what has and has not worked for Millennials. Insights regarding social and political changes that have impacted the religious views and commitments of the Millennial Generation are discussed.

Chapter Three will talk about the purpose of the church and its relationship to being healthy. Examples from Scripture will demonstrate how Christians were able to restore their faith in God by going back to basic practices. This action ignited spiritual growth and elevation throughout the church. In addition, emphasis will be placed on the importance of being dependent on Jesus Christ, how He operated in love, and developed cohesive communal

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<sup>35</sup>2 Chronicles 4:16.

relationships. Most importantly, Biblical foundational principles are outlined that will facilitate church transformation and healing.

Chapter Four offers a systematic leadership-training model that incorporates information obtained and knowledge gained on the Millennial Generation. Practical application strategies will be employed using Biblical values. Exercises are designed to build confidence in participants. This will prepare the church to make the necessary connections needed to bridge the generational gap for future growth.

Chapter Five will summarize the findings of this project based on research and survey assessments. Moreover, it will provide a practical model for the church in preparation for the return of the Millennials.

### Literature Review

There were many sources used to support and complete this thesis project. These resources include the Bible, published books, scholarly articles, theses, and Internet sites. The following list is a review of the literature that was utilized.

### Published Books

Many people in the book, *Deliberate Simplicity*<sup>36</sup> written by Dave Browning, had a desire to go back to basics and simplicity. As a result, a group of believers from Washington State started the Deliberately Simple Church. This church has proven how one can effectively do more with less by operating in homes without borders that have multiplied and spread throughout the country. They use unlicensed and unschooled individuals to conduct ministries, in order to free up the pastor to recognize and prepare ministries. The author found love, acceptance, and

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<sup>36</sup>Dave Browning, *Deliberate Simplicity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, 2009).

forgiveness, which propelled him to become a completely changed person. The Deliberately Simple Church chooses to eliminate massive programs and focus outwardly in order to become a movement instead of an institutional ministry.<sup>37</sup>

*Church Transfusion – Changing Your Church Organically from the Inside Out*<sup>38</sup> was authored by Neil Cole and Phil Helfer. Church transfusion occurs when people are changed from the inside out and not by fancy programs, innovative worship styles, or increased staffing. Churches survive when they are able to die to self and live for Christ. It is necessary that Jesus be recognized as the real leader and head of the church. Also, in order for the church to be successful it must be led by pastors who generously lead and serve as models for their congregations. These pastors should be more concerned about their staff and members more than prestige, money, and elaborate lifestyles. The authors indicate that people are not responsible for their own salvation or anyone else's. Their responsibility is to bring the presence, power, voice, and personal influence of the King to places where He is not being seen, heard, or felt. They need to let Him do what only He can do and let Him get credit for the results.<sup>39</sup>

The author Frank Viola of *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity*<sup>40</sup> discusses how the church has shifted from God's original purpose. Many churches seem to have a profile of that of a business. The author is concerned about the practices of the church and not the purpose of the church. When Viola compared the early church and today's

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<sup>37</sup>Dave Browning, *Deliberate Simplicity*, 195.

<sup>38</sup>Neil Cole and Phil Helfer, *Church Transfusion – Changing Your Church Organically from the Inside Out* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2013).

<sup>39</sup>Cole, *Church Transformation*, 175.

<sup>40</sup>Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church, Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishers, 2008).

church, he found that the New Testament Church depended totally on Jesus Christ. Jesus, and not man, was the center, leader, and controller of the church. Today church is held in a sanctuary or building. However, during the New Testament times church was held in people's homes. The home allowed members to operate in their spiritual gifts, share love, and operate as a family. Often times the church of today lacks community. No member knows another and is strangers. The Lord's Supper in the early church was not just bread and wine but fellowship. The authors suggest that people go back to basic in terms of what is scriptural. God wants people to experience Him as opposed to what has been redesigned. In conclusion, the church that is outlined in Scripture is actually organic and needs to be restored today.

The author Tommy Tenney of *The God Chasers*<sup>41</sup> describes how God is coming to repossess His church, but they have to be hungry for this to happen. Every good thing that the church does should flow from the presence of God. God wants them to be so saturated with His presence and glory that they carry it everywhere they go. He wants them to dwell with Him in intimate communion, but the flesh must first die. They can become so entrenched in being "religious" that they never become spiritual. The church can get prepared for His presence through repentance. This will make the road of their hearts straight. When this happens, they will see people walk through the doors of repentance, and one after another, experience the glory and the presence of God. The next wave of true revival will bring waves of unchurched people. When they hear that there is fresh bread in the house, they will run through the church doors after smelling the fragrance of God.

In Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges book titled *Lead like Jesus*,<sup>42</sup> Jesus transformed twelve ordinary men into leaders that impacted the world 2000 years later. The Bible serves as

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<sup>41</sup>Tommy Tenney, *The God Chasers* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., 1998).

the ultimate tool that is designed to escort them through the leadership process. One key is to train people to lead like Jesus and follow his commands. One must surrender his life to Jesus as found in Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your path.” They must give Jesus complete control of their daily life and allow Him to lead and direct every step. Jesus serves as a role model so that they can lead like Him. The greatest concept is God’s love. This love will lead them into confidence, humility, and true freedom.

In the book *Turn – Around Churches*,<sup>43</sup> the author George Barna, shares strategies that a church can use to become revitalized when they realize that they are dying. The author presents techniques to assess the healthiness of church members. The solution revolves around developing balanced spiritual methods that will enable healthy church growth.

George Barna’s book titled, *Real Teens*<sup>44</sup> paints a very realistic picture of the youth culture and their future. He discusses the challenges they face and what strategies are needed to meet them where they are. The summation of this book is placed upon youth knowing the absolute truth about Jesus Christ.

*Revolutionary Parenting*,<sup>45</sup> also written by George Barna, identifies many wonderful parenting tips that have been successful in raising children. The greatest attribute of parenting is being able to direct parent’s efforts towards Jesus so that children will glorify Him throughout life’s journey.

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<sup>42</sup>Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005).

<sup>43</sup>George Barna, *Turn-Around Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993).

<sup>44</sup>George Barna, *Real Teens* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001).

<sup>45</sup>George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2004).



*Christian Theology*<sup>46</sup> is written by Millard Erickson. He presents Christian doctrines that explain man's existence in his relationship with God. These principles are connected with the inspired word of God, which provides the foundation for truth and faith. This book outlines basic principles for how Christians should live and practice their faith in the world. It also reviews systematic theology through Biblical, historical, and philosophical revelation and documentation.

Elmer Towns and Warren Bird in their book titled, *Into the Future*<sup>47</sup> provides information on how the church can remain relevant in the future by moving towards being healthy, relational, missions minded and worship empowered.

#### Scholarly Articles and Internet Sites

Jan Ferri-Reed outlines in his article, *Millennials – Generation “Screwed” or Generation “Shrew”*<sup>48</sup> how the Millennials are highly stressed because of soaring student loan debts and lack of job opportunities. The author describes this era to be the worst economic time since the Great Depression. Despite the times, the Millennials are adaptable to change and optimistic that the U.S. economy will recover.

In *Welcome to the Future: The Millennial Generation*,<sup>49</sup> Neil Murray discusses the distinguishing characteristic differences between the Millennial Generation and Generation Xers. The author notes that employers will need to make adjustments in many areas in order to

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<sup>46</sup>Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

<sup>47</sup>Elmer Towns and Warren Bird, *Into the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2000).

<sup>48</sup>Jan Ferri-Reed, “Millennials – Generation “Screwed” or Generation “Shrewd,” *The Journal for Quality and Participation* 36, no. 1 (April 2013), 22-23, accessed November 16, 2014.

<sup>49</sup>Neil D. Murray, “Welcome to the future: The Millennial Generation,” *Journal of Career Planning and Employment* 57, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 36-42, [www.liberty.edu.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048](http://www.liberty.edu.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048) (accessed November 16, 2014).

effectively service the Millennial Generation. Therefore, employers will need to seek wise counsel and creative methods to provide for this generation.

*The Millennial View*<sup>50</sup> is a survey conducted with 18 to 29-years-old by Jamaal Abdul-Alim of Georgetown's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs. In this study they were able to portray the characteristics of a typical college-age Millennial. The survey dealt with their opinions on different religious issues. The findings revealed diversity in their responses.

Margaret Hoover, the author of the article titled *How 9/11 Shaped the Millennial Generation...and the lessons for Republicans today*,<sup>51</sup> discuss how the Millennial Generation met the challenge to deal with threatening matters during difficult times in American history. They took on the monumental task with success and developed a sincere love for government. They celebrated the country's victories with enthusiasm and sincere gratitude.

Rachelle Kramer describes in *Polarized Youth? The Millennial Generation, Chant, and the New Roman Missal*<sup>52</sup> how the Millennial Generation is fully connected to technological tools. She further indicates that this generation has a love of community service and is open to diversity. She explains how these factors have an impact on their religious views and overall church membership. The author challenges the church to become educated about this generation in order to bridge the gap and bring unity to the Body of Christ.

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<sup>50</sup>Jamaal Abdul-Alim, "The Millennial View", *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* 29, no. 12 (July 19, 2012): 8-9, [www.liberty.edu.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048](http://www.liberty.edu.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048) (accessed November 12, 2014).

<sup>51</sup>Margaret Hoover, "How 9/11 Shaped the Millennial Generation and lessons for Republicans today," *Ripon Forum* 45, No. 3 (Summer 2011):20-21, [www.liberty.edu.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048](http://www.liberty.edu.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048) (accessed October 22, 2014).

<sup>52</sup>Rachelle Kramer, "Polarized Youth? The Millennial Generation, Chant, and the New Roman Missal," *Pastoral Music* 36, No. 3 (March 2012):15-17, [www.liberty.edu.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048](http://www.liberty.edu.ezproxy.liberty.edu:2048) (accessed November 14, 2014).

The authors Eddy Ng, Linda Schweitzer and Sean Lyons, in their article *New Generation, Great Expectations: A Field Study of the Millennial Generation*<sup>53</sup> review demographic traits pertinent to the Millennial Generation. They discuss and compare their values, attitudes, and outlooks with preceding generations. They discuss strategies on how to engage and retain Millennials in the work place.

### Theses and Dissertations

In the thesis, *The Pastor's Faithless Child: Strengthening Methods for Hurting Parents-Pastors*,<sup>54</sup> Tryan Ayers discusses the hardships faced by a pastor who parents a rebellious child. He was able to interview other pastors who often encountered the same challenges of balancing the role of the profession and parenthood. The author outlines coping mechanisms to curtail stress leading factors and how to cope with personal stress dilemmas.

In *Creating a Millennial Generation Contextualized Church Culture*,<sup>55</sup> the author, Christopher Deitsch, indicates that the Millennial Generation is the largest generation in the history of America. He shares that church membership is declining because churches are unable to reach this generation. He provides several techniques that churches can implement to connect with the Millennials and help increase membership in their congregations.

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<sup>53</sup>Eddy S.W. Ng, Linda Schweitzer and Sean T. Lyons, "New Generation, Great Expectations: A Field Study of the Millennial Generation," *Journal of Business and Psychology* 25, No.2 (June 2010): 281-292, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40605786> (accessed February 3, 2015).

<sup>54</sup>Tryan Ayers, "*The Pastor's Faithless Child: Strengthening Methods for Hurting Parent-Pastors*" (Master's Thesis, Liberty University, 2014).

<sup>55</sup>Christopher Deitsch, "*Creating a Millennial Generation Contextualized Church Culture*" (DMin diss., Liberty University, 2012).

## Scripture

Mathews 28:19-20, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”<sup>56</sup> All Christians are expected to share the gospel so that people will learn and understand the good news of Jesus Christ. Once people are equipped with the good news then they are able to share with others. They actually learn more by teaching others. As the process increases, one subtracts, some add, others release, and then they all eventually multiply.

Mark 4:22, “For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret, but that it should come to light.”<sup>57</sup> This verse reveals the kingdom of God. Once the church learns kingdom principles, then change will occur to transform lives.

The Apostle Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 3:16, “You are the temple of God.”<sup>58</sup> This means that the church is not a physical building, but believers united together in and with Christ. Christ is the head of the body and the people are the church. Hence, healing must begin within God’s people. If the body of Christ does not heal, then membership will decline and the church will die. As a result, the church will not fulfill the potential that the Lord has designed for them.

2 Chronicles 7:14, “If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”<sup>59</sup> In order to build a healthy church it is necessary to go

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<sup>56</sup>Mathew 28:19.

<sup>57</sup>Mark 4:22.

<sup>58</sup>1 Corinthians 3:16.

<sup>59</sup>2 Chronicles 2:14.

back to prayer. God will bring forth healing when the church becomes humble, seeks the face of God, and repents of their sins.

John 10:10, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”<sup>60</sup> The Lord ensures us that everlasting life is with Him, but the enemy comes to destroy everything that the Lord does for His people.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.”<sup>61</sup> The Lord gives His people spiritual weapons to fight battles that come against them.

Romans 13:11-14, “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”<sup>62</sup> It is time to fight the spiritual battle of destruction that the people of God are facing.

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<sup>60</sup>John 10:10.

<sup>61</sup>2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

<sup>62</sup>Romans 13:11-14.

Acts 2:39, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”<sup>63</sup> The Lord made a promise to Peter and future generations that the church He built would last forever.

Acts 2:40-41, “And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, be saved from this perverse Generation. Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”<sup>64</sup> After Peter was influenced by the Holy Spirit and preached, three thousand people repented, received salvation, and were baptized.

Acts 9:31, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied. The body of Christ was delivered from bitterness and put into a place of rest. They began to enjoy peace and were elevated in faith and holiness.”<sup>65</sup> The fear of the Lord came upon them and, as a result, the church multiplied tremendously.

Ephesians 3:21, “To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”<sup>66</sup> As the church began to unify through humility, they became unified with Christ internally. The church, in essence was the vehicle that the Lord would use to reveal his glory. This glory would be given to God by the church.

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<sup>63</sup>Acts 2:39.

<sup>64</sup>Acts 2:40-41.

<sup>65</sup>Acts 9:31.

<sup>66</sup>Ephesians 3:21.

Colossians 1:24, “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.”<sup>67</sup> All of Jesus’ suffering was for the Body of Christ with the purpose of uniting the body and the head. Christ shows His suffering as the inward power to encourage the church.

Luke 15: 17-19, “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.”’<sup>68</sup> The story of the prodigal son begins when a son ask his father for his inheritance. It was insulting and a sign of disrespect in Jewish customs for a child to ask for his inheritance. It was an indication of wishing death upon his parent. If this were to happen, the child would be ostracized by the family. Despite custom, the father, without reservation, gave the younger son his inheritance. The son soon lost everything that he had received from his father and began to think about the repercussions of his actions. He became humble and decided to return to his home to seek forgiveness from his father.

Luke 15:20-21, “And he arose and came to his father. When he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’”<sup>69</sup> His father saw his son from a distance and because of his love for him; he embraced him with a great kiss. The first words that the son uttered to his father were that he had

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<sup>67</sup>Colossians 1:24.

<sup>68</sup>Luke 15:17-19.

<sup>69</sup>Luke 15:20-21.

sinned against him and his heavenly father. The father was so overjoyed with the return of his lost son that he decided to celebrate. He did not scold him for wasting his inheritance, but just loved him. The oldest son started home after working all day and heard the noise of a party. When he found out that his younger brother had come back home, he became very angry. The father explained to the son that no matter what the younger son had done, it was time to celebrate his return from darkness into the light.

In summary, the Millennials, totaling 80 million, are projected to become the most powerful generation in history. Studies have shown that each generation presents different characteristics. Therefore, it is necessary to meet the challenge of bridging the generational gap that is prevalent in the culture of the church. Hence, if the church is to remain relevant in today's society, they must get ready for change so that they can be used by God to help usher this generation back into the arms of God. Moreover, the church must empower the Millennials so that they will grow in Christ and step into their God ordained purpose.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **GENERATIONAL SURVEYS AND TRENDS**

#### **The Research Process**

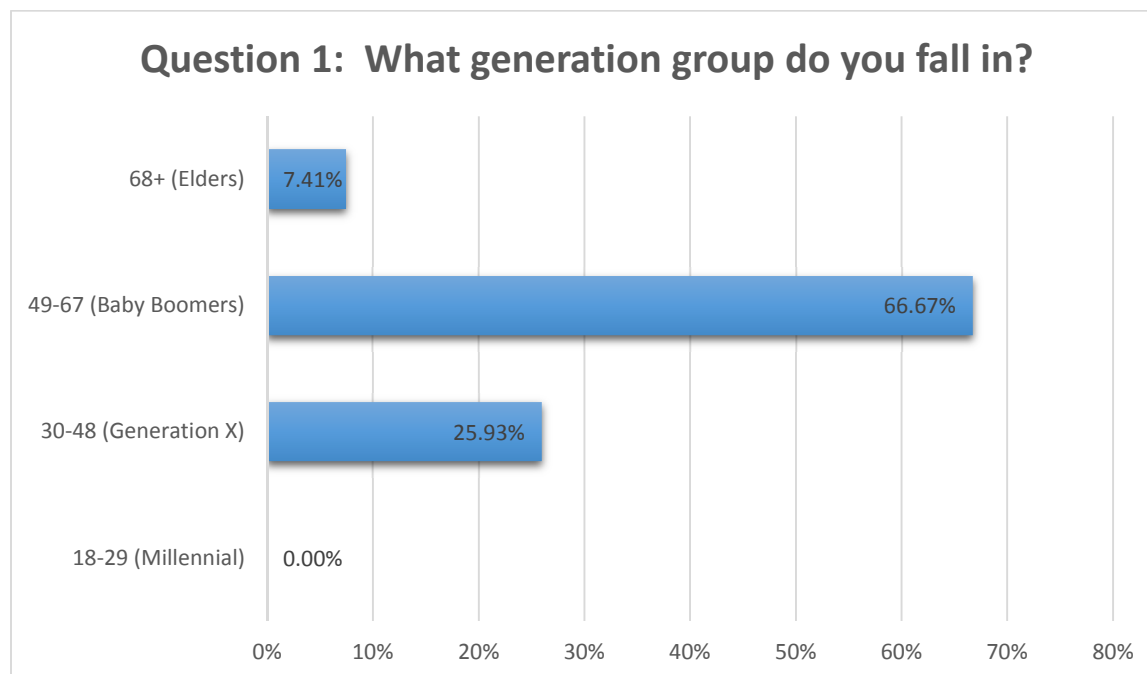
The first phase of the research was to conduct a survey to ascertain information regarding the membership, participation, and program recommendations for Millennials in the church. This survey consists of two sections. The first section was designed to solicit responses from pastors and youth/young adult leaders. The second section was developed to receive answers from churched and unchurched young adults between the ages of 18 and 29. Each section has ten survey questions written in the form of multiple choice and fill in the blanks. The qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to gain an understanding and measure the attitudes and behaviors of the Millennial Generation. A target population was identified and one hundred persons throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan area were invited to participate in the survey. Once sixty participants had consented and completed the survey, the recruitment of survey participants ceased. The target population represented respondents from churches that ranged between twenty-five and six thousand active members. The survey was anonymous and confidential. The participants were not asked their names, church affiliations, or any other identifying information. This survey was conducted online through an evaluation instrument called Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey quickly provided the data that was needed to analyze specifics of the Millennial Generation and develop appropriate strategies for this project.

The second phase of the research consisted of exploring information in books, journals, and data results from studies conducted, regarding specific trends relative to the Millennial Generation. Data was retrieved from prominent research organizations such as the Barna Group

whose focus is on religious related issues. The information received from all sources was consistent. These findings will be instrumental in developing a training model for pastors, leaders, and congregants on strategic methods used to reconnect with the Millennial Generation.

### Millennial Generation Survey

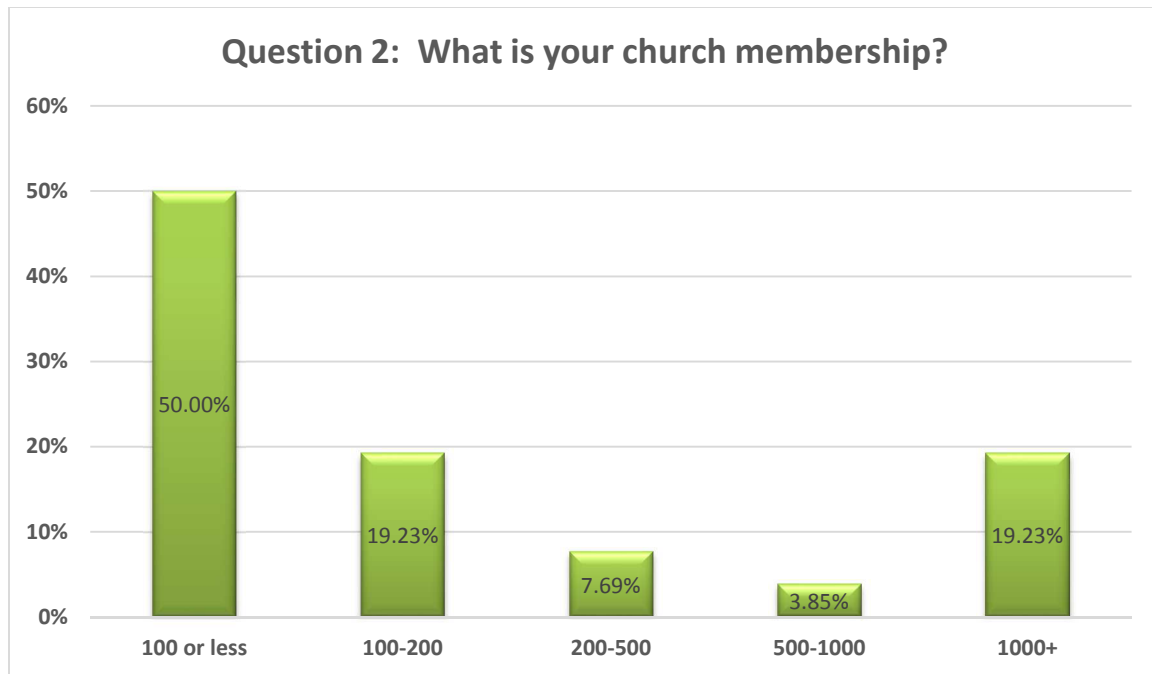
#### Pastors and Youth/Young Adult Leaders



*Figure 1: What Generation group do you fall in?*

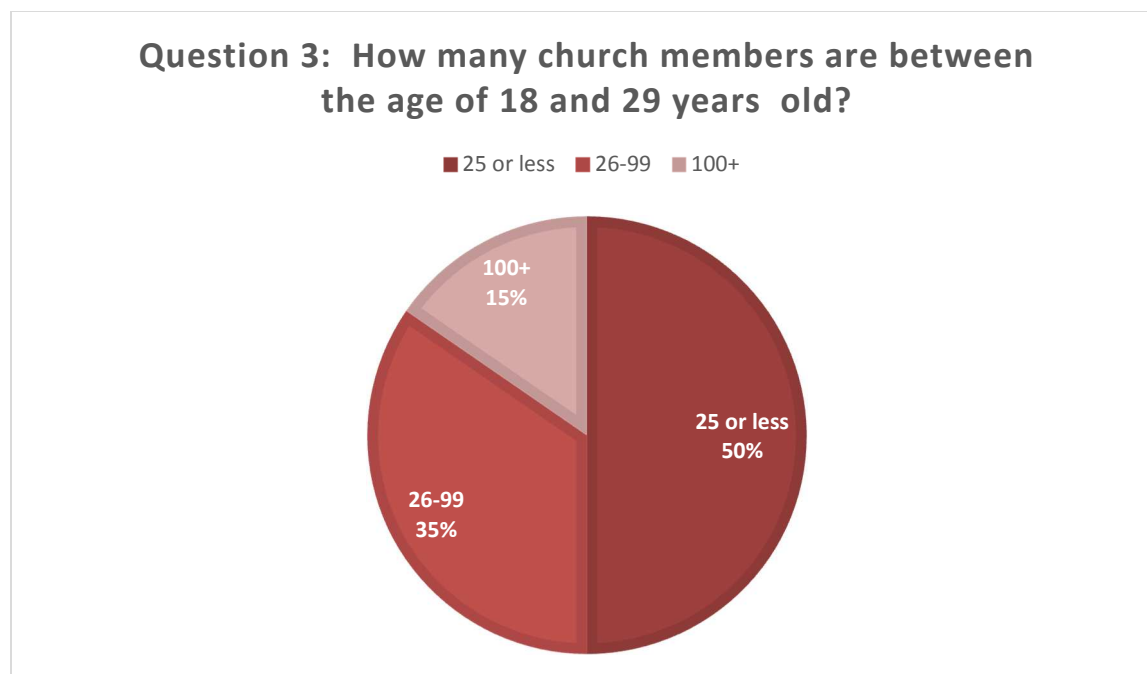
Answer Choices	Responses
18-29 (Millennial)	0.00 percent
30-48 (Generation X)	25.93 percent
49-67 (Baby Boomers)	66.67 percent
68+ (Elders)	7.41 percent

Question 1: What Generation group do you fall in? The majority of those who completed this survey were a part of the Baby Boomer Generation. They represent 67.67 percent of the respondents. In addition, 25.93 percent of the respondents were Generation Xers and 7.41 percent were the Elders, while 0 percent of the survey participants were Millennials.



*Figure 2: What is your church membership?*

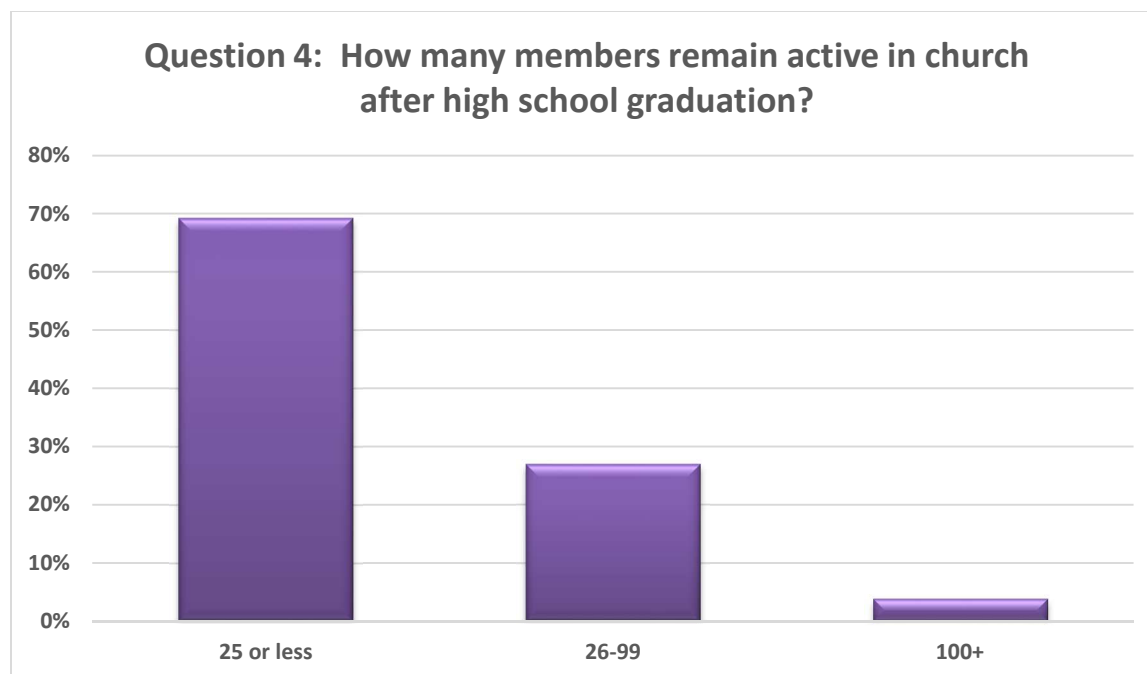
Question 2: What is your church membership? The church membership of those who responded to the survey ranged from small churches with less than 100 members to mega-churches with over 1000 members. Hence, 50 percent of the respondents' churches have 100 or less members. The results showed that 19.23 percent of the respondents have 100 to 200 members, 19.23 percent have over 1000 members, 7.69 percent have between 200 and 500 members, and 3.85 percent have 500 to 100 members.



*Figure 3: How many church members are between the age of 18 and 29 years old?*

Answer Choices	Responses
25 or less	50.00 percent
26-99	34.62 percent
100+	15.38 percent

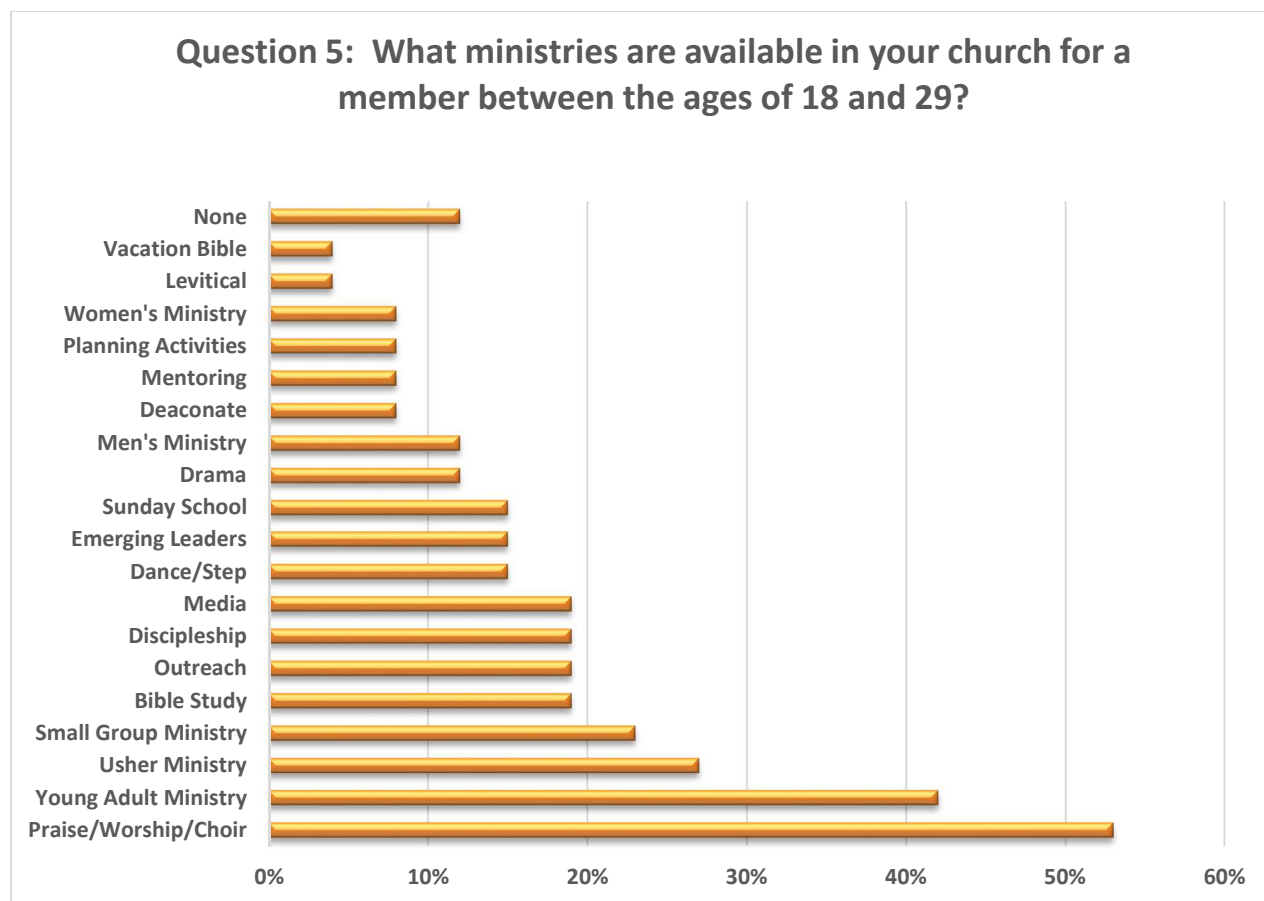
Question 3: How many church members are between the age of 18 and 29 years old? The data revealed that no matter the size of church membership, 50 percent of those who responded to the survey have only 25 or less members between the age of 18 and 28 years old. The survey showed that 34.62 percent of the respondents were between 26 and 99 church members within this age group and 15.38 percent of the respondents had over 100 members.



*Figure 4: How many members remain active in church after high school graduation?*

Answer Choices	Responses
25 or less	69.23 percent
26-99	26.92 percent
100+	3.85 percent

Once more, the data revealed that no matter the size of the church membership, 69.23 percent of those who responded to the survey had 25 or fewer members that remained active in church after high school graduation. While 26.92 percent of the survey respondents had between 26 and 99 church members still active within this age group, only 3.85 percent of them had over 100 members.



*Figure 5: What ministries are available for a member between the ages of 18 and 29?*

Question 5: What ministries are available for a member between the ages of 18 and 29?

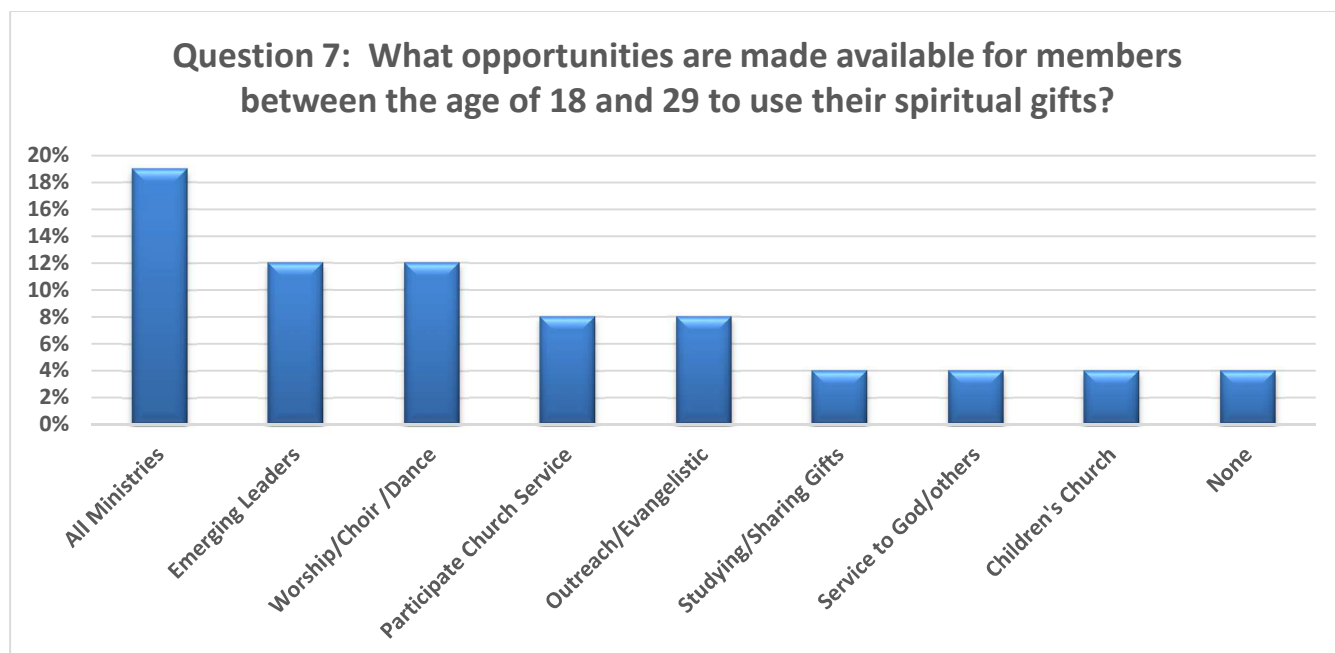
The survey indicated that a Praise and Worship Team, Young Adult Choir, Young Adult Ministry, Usher Ministry, and Small Group Ministry were offered between 27 percent and 53 percent of the churches that participated in this study. Additional ministry offerings were available for 4 percent to 19 percent of those who responded. They included: media, dance, Sunday School, drama, mentoring, Vacation Bible School, and Women's Ministry. Of the churches represented did not have any ministries dedicated to the young adult membership.



*Figure 6: How do you identify the spiritual gifts of your church members?*

Question 6: How do you identify the spiritual gifts of your church members? The survey indicated that 49 percent of the respondents indicated that they identify the spiritual gifts of their church members through training, and 39 percent of them by survey assessments.

Approximately, 19 percent of the survey participants identified their spiritual gifts based on observation whereas, 12 percent utilize self-identification. Unfortunately, 15 percent of the respondents indicated that their church does not use any tools to identify spiritual gifts.



*Figure 7: What opportunities are made available for members to use their spiritual gifts?*

Question 7: What opportunities are made available for members to use their spiritual gifts? According to the survey results, only 19 percent of those who responded made opportunities available for members between the age of 18 and 29 to use their spiritual gifts within all ministries. In addition, 4 percent to 12 percent of those who responded indicated that they provided limited opportunities such as outreach, training, and dance to their members. There were 4 percent of the survey participants who reported that their church did not have any opportunities available to this age group.



<b>Question 8: How can the ministry for members between the ages of 18 and 29 at your church be improved?</b>	
<b>The respondents made the following suggestions to improve the ministry for members between the ages of 18 and 19:</b>	<b>Responses</b>
1. Focus on their issues and concerns	12 percent
2. Sponsor activities geared towards Young Adults	12 percent
3. Seek support and assistance from older members	12 percent
4. Establish a ministry for Young Adults	8 percent
5. Show more consistency and accountability in the services that are provided for Young Adults	8 percent
6. Institute an organized training program	8 percent
7. Provide more opportunities for Young Adults to participate	8 percent
8. Involve Young Adults in planning activities	8 percent
9. Budget additional funding for programmatic needs	4 percent
10. Conduct an evaluation to assess needs	4 percent
11. Hire additional staff	4 percent
12. Become more relevant	4 percent
13. Open lines of communication	4 percent
14. Provide pastoral care	4 percent
15. Study the Word of God	4 percent

Question 8: How can the ministry for members between the ages of 18 and 29 at your church be improved? When asked about how the ministry for members between the ages of 18 and 29 at their church could be improved, 12 percent of the respondents indicated that there needed to be a greater focus on their ideas and concerns, more activities geared towards Millennial Generation, and more support from older members. Others felt that better communication is needed. Whereas, respondents believe that compromise can make a difference in helping young people excel at home, school, and church. Overall, improvements can occur when young adults are allowed in planning events and sharing ideas of interest without judgment, however, with support and guidance.

Question 9: How might the Millennial Generation (18-29 years old) reshape the church in the future? Responses to the question about how the Millennials will reshape the church in the

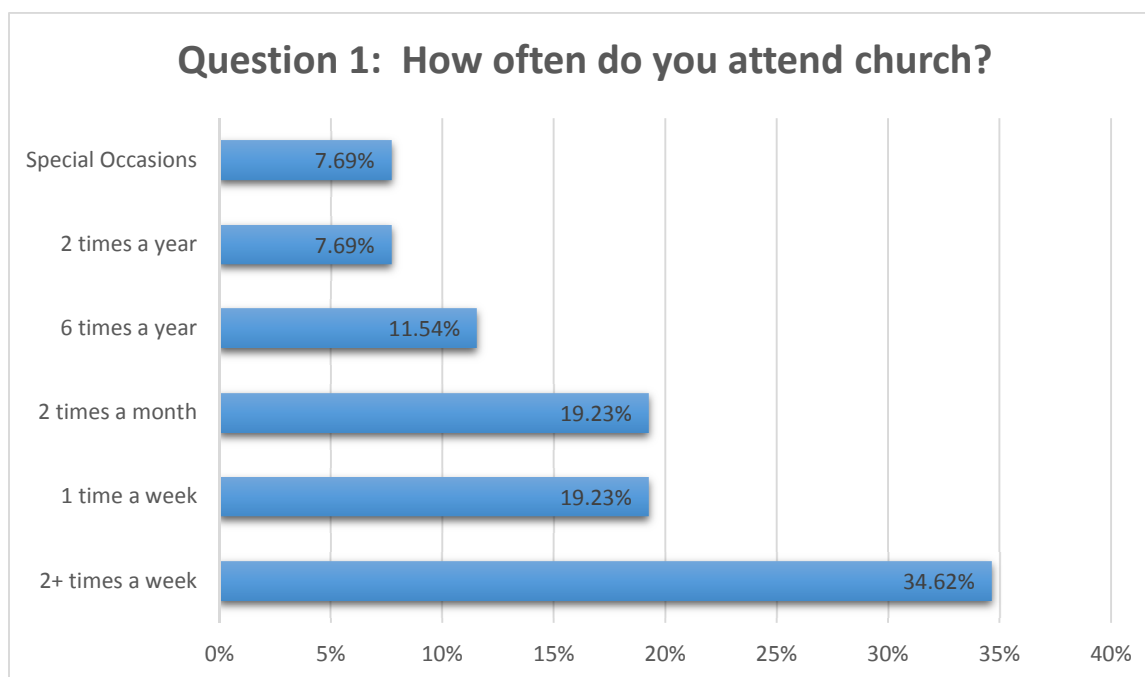
future reveal that their impact will be greater than any other generation in recent history. They most frequently reported that every aspect of the way that the church takes part in ministry would be impacted by them from communication of the message, meeting space, giving, and serving the community. Respondents said that their methods of presenting the Gospel will probably be different, their songs will be more generational, and their ways of worship will be unlike ours. They will shape the church and their future according to what they perceive is best for them. The Millennial Generation is the future. Therefore, it is important to not only provide training, but also allow them to express themselves and provide ideas. A few respondents said that they should be given the freedom and support to use their gifts, even if it means allowing them to make mistakes. Other respondents said that the Millennials will provide a fresh perspective and renewed energy to the church.

<b>Question 10: What can be done to win the Millennial Generation (18-29 years old) back to church?</b>	
<b>The respondents comments included:</b>	
1.	Ask them what they want. Listen more to them and observe their interests. Communication is the key to a better working relationship.
2.	Get them involved from the ground up with real planning. Include them in every area of the church by using their suggestions, even if they are not embraced by the older members.
3.	Begin reaching out and mentoring them prior to age 18.
4.	Become more flexible and relevant to their needs.
5.	Some believe that when the saint's lifestyle becomes consistent with their Christian jargon, then they will start attracting the Millennials. Presently, this group looks at them as hypocrites.
6.	Engage them in leadership roles. Stop looking at them as a lost Generation. Be transparent and share your testimonies and life struggles.
7.	Be more open minded and let them know that they have worth and value.
8.	Empower them to use the gifts that God has given them.
9.	Give them a Sunday every month to express their mode of worship.
10.	Present a relative ministry that reaches them where they are.
11.	Share the history of the church.
12.	Continue to present the Gospel, as it is, be patient, open and work together. There is one goal, and that is to help someone gain Christ through salvation, and understand that the God we serve is their God also.

13. Get them involved in Outreach Ministry.
14. Give them the freedom to serve as they are.
15. Launch more ministries using social media.
16. Patiently wait them out. They will return once they find the void in their spiritual pursuits.

Question 10: What can be done to win the Millennial Generation (18-29 years old) back to church? Responses to what can be done to win the Millennials back say that the church must continue to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. More importantly, they must also live up to His teachings, and emulate His lifestyle so that they will see Christ in one's actions. Others report that the church cannot sit still. It has to meet them where they are and deal with them as unique individuals. In addition, the church cannot expect the Millennials to volunteer unsolicited for traditional church programs. They must go into the places where they already congregate and show them that God is relevant to their deepest desires and longings.

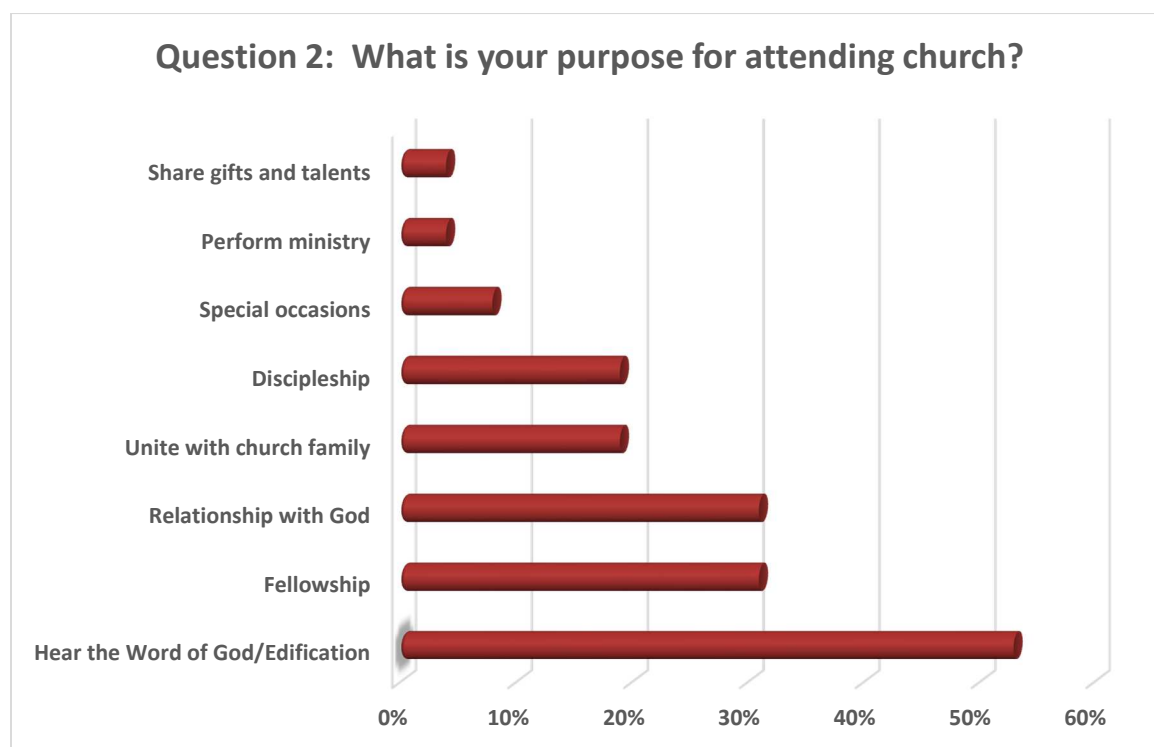
#### Millennial Generation Survey for 18 to 29 years old



*Figure 8: How often do you attend church?*

Answer Choices	Participant Response
2+ times a week	34.62 percent
1 time a week	19.23 percent
2 times a month	19.23 percent
6 times a year	11.54 percent
2 times a year	7.69 percent
Only on special occasions (funerals, weddings, etc.)	7.69 percent

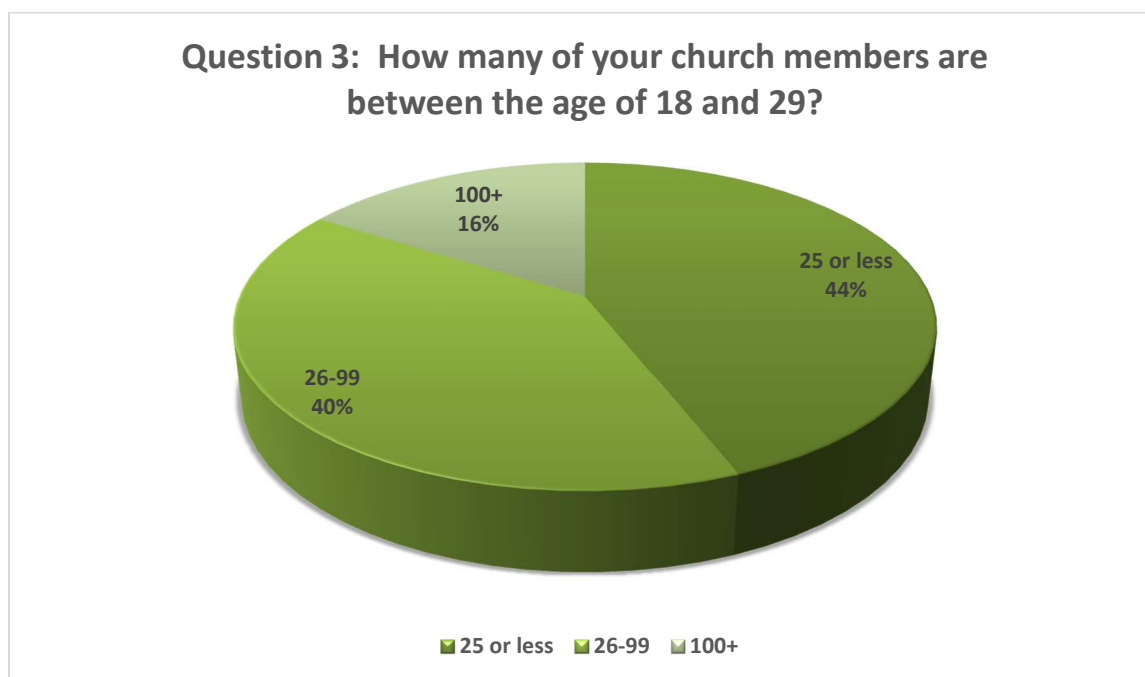
Question 1: How often do you attend church? Of those surveyed, 34.62 percent of them attend church at least twice a week; while 19.23 percent attend once a week and 19.23 percent attend twice a month. Additionally, 11.54 percent attend six times a year, 7.69 percent attend twice a year, and 7.69 percent only attend on special occasions.



*Figure 9: What is your purpose for attending church?*

Question 2: What is your purpose for attending church? The survey concluded that 53 percent of the respondents indicated their reason for attending church was to hear the word of God and for edification, while 31 percent attended for fellowship and develop a relationship with

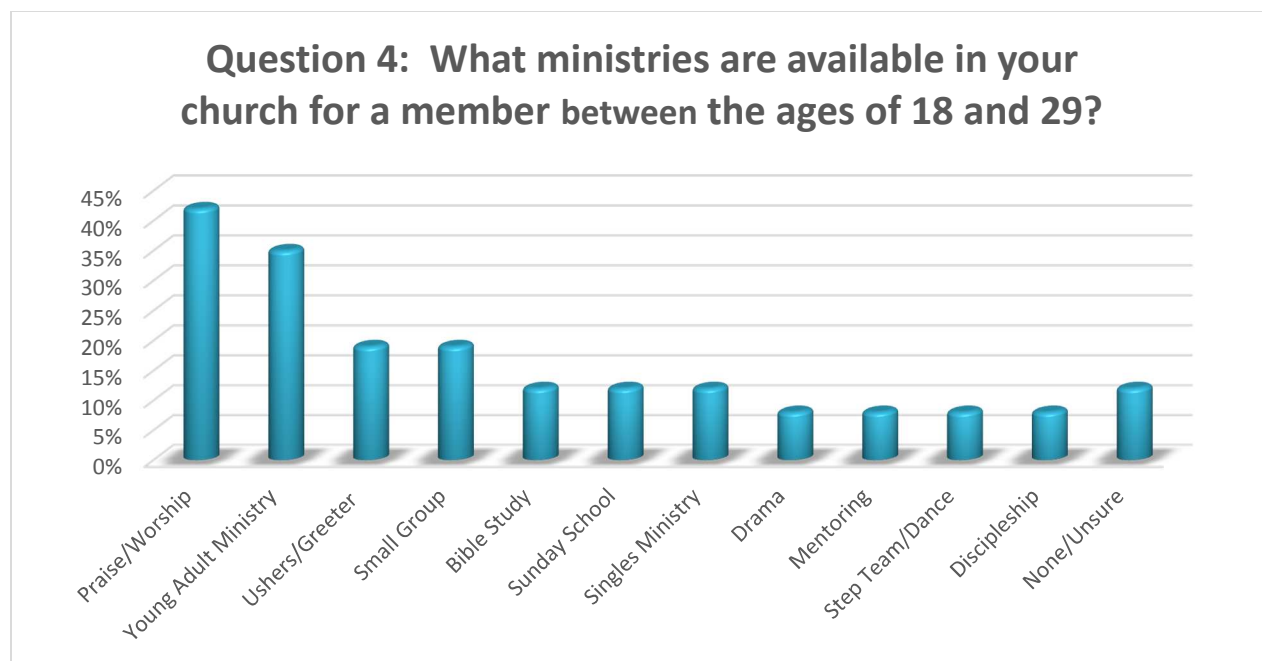
God. Another 19 percent attended services for discipleship and is united with the church family. An additional 8 percent only attend on special occasions and 4 percent received an opportunity to minister and share their spiritual gifts. Foremost, young adults attend church to connect with other believers, worship corporately, and receive encouragement and instructions concerning their Christian walk.



*Figure 10: How many of your church members are between the age of 18 and 29?*

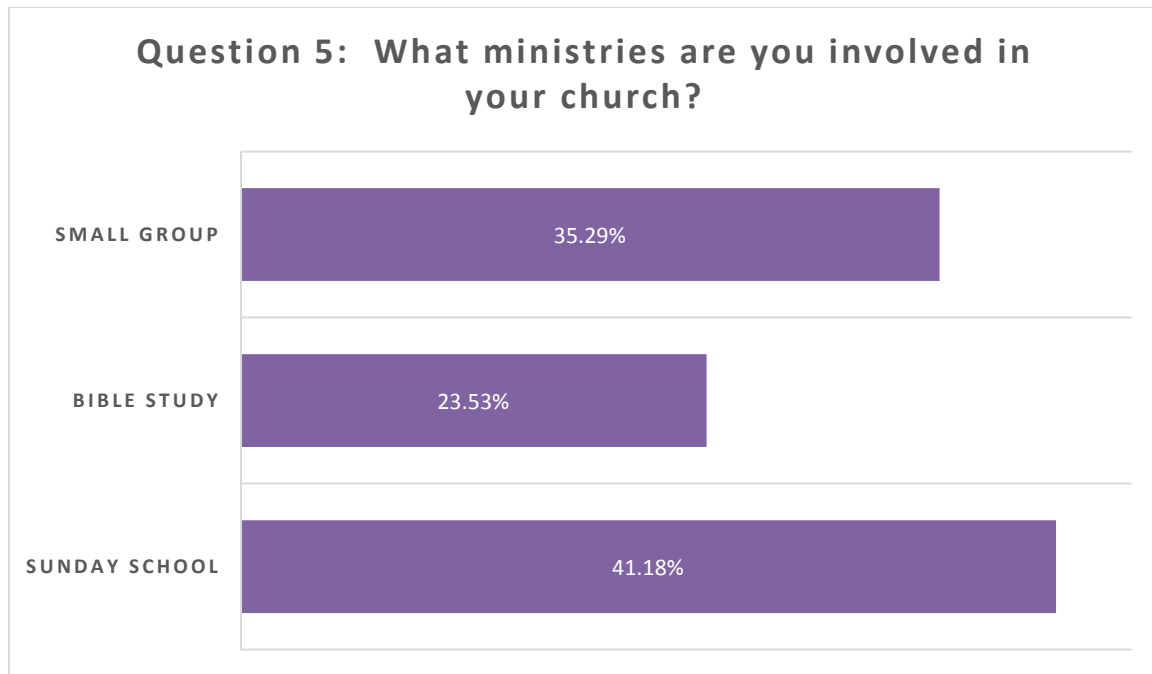
Answer Choices	Participant Response
25 or less	44.00 percent
26-99	40.00 percent
100+	16.00 percent

Question 3: How many of your church members are between the age of 18 and 29? The data revealed that no matter the size of church membership, 44 percent of those who responded to the survey had 25 or fewer members that remained active in church after high school graduation. While 40 percent of the survey respondents had between 26 and 99 church members still active within this age group, 16 percent of them had over 100 members.



*Figure 11: What ministries are available in your church for a member between the ages of 18 and 29?*

Question 4: What ministries are available in your church for a member between the ages of 18 and 29? A Praise and Worship Ministry is available in 42 percent of the churches that participated in the survey, whereas 35 percent have a Young Adult Ministry and 19 percent of them have an Ushers Ministry and Small Group Ministry. In addition, Bible Study, Sunday school, and Singles Ministry are available at 12 percent of the churches for a member between the ages of 18 and 29. Moreover, 8 percent of the churches offer drama, mentoring, and discipleship training for young adult members. There were 12 percent of the survey respondents who shared that their church did not have any ministry available for this age group.



*Figure 12: What ministries are you involved in your church?*

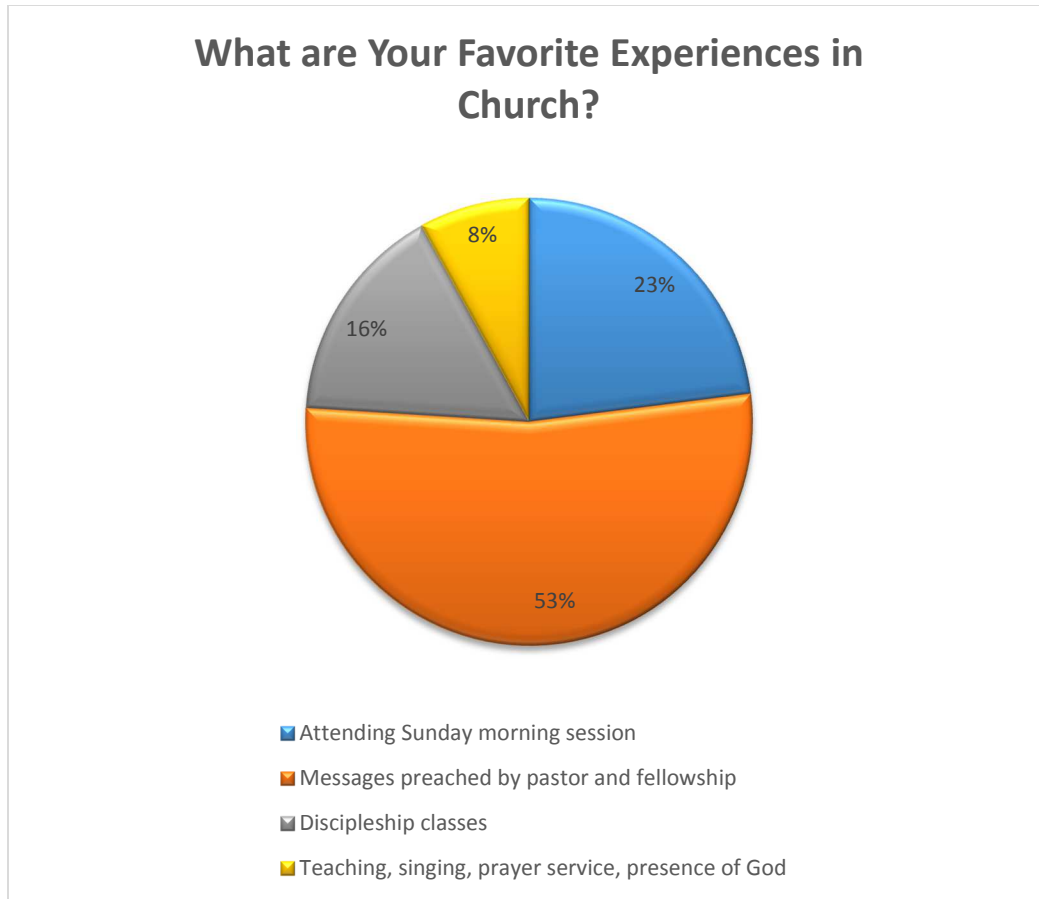
Question 5: What ministries are you involved in your church? The survey showed that 41.18 percent of the respondents participate in Sunday school, 35 percent in Small Groups, and 24 percent attend Bible Study. Additionally, 23.54 percent of the respondents are also involved in the choir and media and 28 percent participate in the Young Adult Ministry. It was noted that 23.53 percent of the respondents are not involved in any church ministry.



*Figure 2: Are you pleased with the opportunities made available to use your spiritual gifts?*

Question 6: Are you pleased with the opportunities made available to use your spiritual gifts? Of those who participated in this survey 48 percent are pleased with the opportunities made available to use their spiritual gifts. In addition, 28 percent were moderately pleased and 24 percent of them were slightly pleased. There were 0 percent of the surveyors who reported being displeased.

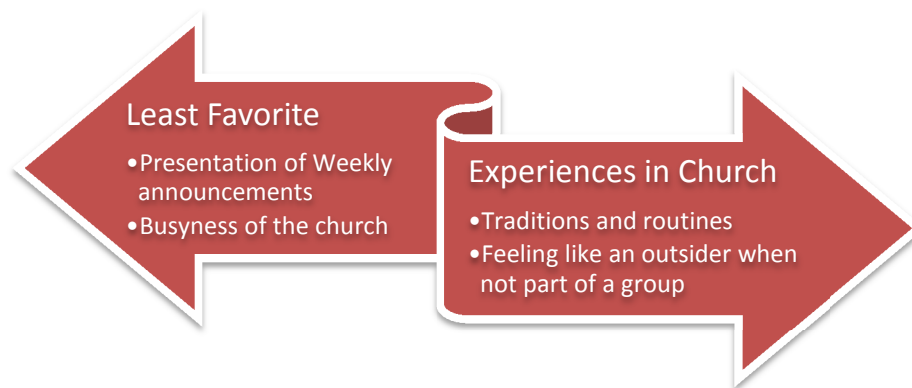




*Figure 14: What are your favorite experiences in church?*

Question 7: What are your favorite experiences in church? The survey showed that 53 percent of the respondents enjoyed the messages preached by the pastor and fellowship with other believers the most. Another 23 percent enjoyed attending Sunday morning services and 16 percent loved participating in discipleship classes. Lastly, there were 8 percent who enjoyed teaching, experiencing the presence of God, singing, attending prayer services, and going on church trips.

Question 8: What are your least favorite experiences in your church?	
1.	Presentation of weekly announcements.
2.	Busyness of the church.
3.	Traditions and routines.
4.	Feeling like an outsider when not part of a group.
5.	Being pressured to do things that they are not comfortable with.
6.	New member's classes.
8.	When the former pastor died and attending funerals.
9.	Sermons that last longer than 25 minutes.
10.	Feeling that the service is only for older people.
11.	Waking up to the 6 a.m. prayer call.
12.	Nothing.



*Figure 15: Least Favorite Experiences in Your Church*

<b>Question 9: How can the ministry of the members between the age of 18 and 29 be improved and or reshaped for the future?</b>	
<b>The respondents made the following recommendations:</b>	
1.	Eliminate the barrier of tradition and routine. Trust young people to serve where there is less dictating and more empowering.
2.	Incorporate technology into Bible study.
3.	Organize more outreach, social and professional development activities that are catering to them.
4.	Pray for the young people.
5.	Love them for who they are, remembering that "all" have sinned and come short of the glory of God.
6.	Encourage ministers to preach messages that they can relate to, as they struggle coming into adulthood.
7.	Give young adults opportunities to be leaders in the church.
8.	Have the young adults provide feedback and input about the various ministries.
9.	Encourage young adults to step up, utilize their gifts, and do the works of God.
10.	Allow them to make personal improvements, as they continue to figure out what they want in terms of religion.
11.	Not sure, they will figure it out.
12.	Have guest speakers come and talk about how to live as a Christian in the church, workplace, and home.
13.	Design relationship programs that encourage people to connect with one another.
14.	Develop a willingness to learn about their issues and characteristics.
15.	Do nothing. Everything is fine.

*Table 2: How can the ministry of the members between the age of 18 and 29 be improved and for reshaped for the future?*

Some respondents who participated in this survey felt that church leaders could be more engaging, empathetic, and supportive of Millennials. Many young people, by association of their age and the culture connected, are judged largely before they even decide first attend any church. Some feel that this is unfair. Leaders could use more guidance in learning how to work with young people. Preachers could also find more creative ways to connect with Millennials during their sermons and give them a platform allowing their voices to be heard. A few suggested that it is imperative that doctrine is not watered down to win a generation. When unchurched young people see that other church young people are dedicated, they will do the same. Some of the

respondents say make no changes, while others believe that the Holy Spirit will move the generation back.

<b>Question 10: What can be done to win the Millennial Generation 18-29 year old back to church?</b>	
<b>The respondents made the following recommendations:</b>	
1.	Start Young Adult Bible sessions incorporated with technology along with open discussion.
2.	Be real, honest, open, transparent, and accept the younger generation for who they are.
3.	Allow them to be a part of the decision making process.
4.	Establish more outreach activities and evangelize young adults in colleges, hospitals, and prisons.
5.	Attend Young Adult workshops and conferences.
6.	Tailor messages that reach this generation.
7.	Remember that this is a new generation and some of the things that worked in the old church won't work now.
8.	Build relationships with one another.
9.	Pray for one another.
10.	Have young evangelists speak to younger people.
11.	Someone needs to step up and assume the role as a strong leader.
12.	More "come as you are" mentality and social events that allow others in this generation what it means to have fun and fellowship with other believers.
13.	Nothing needs to change.

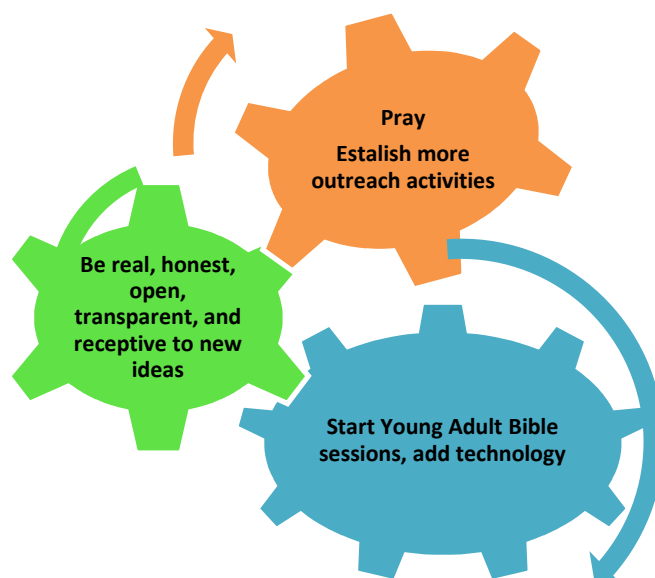


Figure 16: What can be done to win the Millennial Generation back?

In summary, Millennials are a generation without many inhibitions or fears; therefore they will be unstoppable in the Kingdom of God. They are the church of the future. They will shape the church in powerful ways. Some feel that the church will become more organic and less programmatic. This is likely to cause a massive budget crisis for all, but even more so for the wealthy mega-churches. In order for them to move forward effectively, they will need to be equipped with the tools to do what God is calling them to do. They need the church to allow what God is calling them to do. They need people to trust the God within them, just as they trusted the God. The church needs to listen to the dreams and visions that God has given them and help them carry them out. Most importantly, the church needs to obtain practical approaches from the lessons to develop effective principles in order to reclaim the Millennial Generation.

#### National Trends

It is time to embrace the recent research on Millennials. Scripture states, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hose 4:6). Therefore, social research is very necessary so that people are able to receive a glimpse of what is going on around the country as it relates to certain issues. In addition, “It provides us with very relevant information about trends, beliefs, practices, and the general direction of a society.”<sup>1</sup> Most importantly, “social research enables social scientists and leaders to make predictions about the future based upon the statistical analysis and trends that they see in the present.”<sup>2</sup> Moreover, this information can be used to make wise decisions for future endeavors. The following demographic information is statistical data that

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<sup>1</sup>Geoffrey Guns, “7 Keys to Reaching the Millennial Generation” *The Christian Education Informer, A Journal of Christians Education* 66, no.3 (November 2014): 28-32, (accessed February 2, 2015).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

was reported by The Barna Group, The Gallup Group, and The Pew Research Center. The excerpt below is the Executive Summary from the February 24, 2010, report on Millennials:

Generations, like people, have personalities, and Millennials-the American teens and twenty-somethings who are making the passage into adulthood at the start of a new millennium-have begun to forge theirs: confident, self-expressive, liberal, upbeat and open to change. They are more ethnically and racially diverse than older adults. They are less religious, less likely to have served in the military, and are on track to become the most educated in the history of America. Their entry into careers and first jobs has been set back by the Great Recession, but they are more upbeat than their elders about their own economic futures as well about the overall state of the nation.<sup>3</sup>

### Churchlessness

Churchlessness is on the rise throughout the United States based on a recent study by the Barna Group. According to their study, churchlessness has increased from 10 percent to 43 percent among American adults over the past three decades.<sup>4</sup> As the world evolves, it becomes less popular to attend church as it once was in previous years.

One would ask, “What is churchlessness?” Wiktionary defines churchlessness as, “the absence of churches and the failure to attend a church.”<sup>5</sup> Barna defines churchless as, “someone who has not attended a Christian church service, other than a special event such as a wedding or funeral, at any time during the past six months.”<sup>6</sup> The church cannot sit dormant and assume that the unchurched will eventually come back to worship. They must be proactive in their efforts to become more effective on how to unite and maintain connections with them.<sup>7</sup> It is an obligation

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<sup>3</sup>Guns, “7 Keys to Reaching the Millennial Generation,” 29.

<sup>4</sup>George Barna and David Kinnaman, *Churchless* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2014), 9.

<sup>5</sup>Wiktionary contributors, “churchless,” *Wiktionary, The Free Dictionary*, <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/churchless>, (accessed January 23, 2015).

<sup>6</sup>Barna, *Churchless*, 6.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, 4.

of the church to understand the unchurched as well as fulfill the mandates established in Mathews 28:19, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>8</sup> If the church endeavors to bridge the gap that is prevalent between the church and unchurched, they must make a concerted effort to understand their culture and how to communicate with them.<sup>9</sup> As important, is the necessity to understand their pains, concerns, and desires. These components are needed in order to develop worthwhile relationships.

The Barna study divided the American group into four categories. The first group is identified as the *actively church* who attend church at least once a month.<sup>10</sup> They consist of 49 percent of the adult population. The second group that represents 8 percent of this population is called the *minimally church*.<sup>11</sup> They are unstable, but attend several times a year, showing up for special occasions and holidays such as Christmas, Easter, and Mother’s Day.<sup>12</sup> The third group represents 33 percent of this population and is called the *de-church*.<sup>13</sup> This group was once active in church, but now no longer attend. They appear to be the fastest growing group. The fourth group is called the *purely unchurched* who could possibly show a great increase in the future.<sup>14</sup> They represent 10 percent of the total population. The Barna study also revealed other

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<sup>8</sup>Mathew 28:19.

<sup>9</sup>Barna, *Churchless*, 5.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 7.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, 8.

interesting facts. There are more churchless men, but the percent for women is increasing. Most churchless people are single, white, and claim to be Christians.<sup>15</sup>

“On the other hand, the Pew Research Group identified that 20 percent of Americans have no religious connection. Within that group 33 percent of them are Millennials. This finding totals approximately 33 million Americans who are unchurched.”<sup>16</sup> The Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life conducted a study with the PBS television program, Religion & Ethics News Weekly. They found that even though this group is unchurched, they remained religious. Specifically, 68 percent of them believe in God, 58 percent are connected to nature and the Earth, 37 percent are spiritual, and 21 percent of them pray every day.<sup>17</sup> Those who are spiritual believe in connecting with the dead, psychics, physical objects, yoga, and New Age practices.<sup>18</sup> Their interest focuses on developing community relationships and helping the poor. They fault the church for being overly involved in money, politics, and power.

The study showed another group called the *nones*. These claim no religious affiliations. This group identified that 56 percent of the *nones* are young males, 71 percent white, and 68 percent believe in God.<sup>19</sup> They are strong Democrats, liberals, moderates, and Westerners. *Nones* are supporters of the legalization of abortion and same-gender marriage.<sup>20</sup> In summary, many of these group are not interested in finding or connecting with a church.

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<sup>15</sup>Barna, *Churchless*, 8.

<sup>16</sup>Gary Funk and Greg Smith, “Nones on the Rise,” *Pew Research Center* (October 9, 2012) [www.pewforum.org/w/2012/10/09/Pew Report](http://www.pewforum.org/w/2012/10/09/Pew+Report) (accessed November 29, 2014).

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*



The Gallup team tracked this same group called *nones* that also declared to have no religious affiliation. Their study showed that the number of *nones* increased from 14.6 percent in 2008 to 17.8 percent in 2012.<sup>21</sup> According to Gallup, this group normally consists of Asians, young people, political independents, men, New Englanders, and others from the Pacific coast.

A few scholars believe that some young adults remain unaffiliated with religion because they view it as “judgmental, homophobic, hypocritical, and too political.”<sup>22</sup> A theory exists that church attendance is impacted by social and demographic trends that result in Millennials waiting longer to marry and have children. Another theory is that this generation has become loners. They are not interested in belonging to community established settings or groups. In addition, people tend to operate in secularization when a country such as America is financially stable and in good health.

According to another study conducted by the Pew Research Center titled, *Teaching the Children: Sharp Ideological Differences, Some Common Ground*, only 30 percent parents feel that teaching their children religious faith is important.<sup>23</sup> In fact, 55 percent of them believe that it is more important to teach their children responsibility, while 42 percent focus on their children learning positive work ethics.<sup>24</sup> As a result, when Christian values are not taught in the home, children show little interest in religious faith once they become adults.

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<sup>21</sup>Lydia Saad, “Rise in Religious “Nones” Slows in 2012,” *Religion News* (January 13, 2013) <http://www.gallup.com/poll/159785/rise-religious-nones-slows-2012.aspx> (accessed January 4, 2015).

<sup>22</sup>Funk, “Nones on the Rise.”

<sup>23</sup>“Teaching the Children: Sharp Ideological Differences, Some Common Ground,” *U.S. Politics* (September 14, 2014), <http://www.people-press.org/2014/09/18/teaching-the-children-sharp-ideological-differences-common-ground> (accessed December 15, 2014).

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

Additionally, based on a study that the Barna Group conducted in 2014, it was determined that the increase of one-third of Americans, categorized as unchurched people, were a result of their secular beliefs and habits.<sup>25</sup> Their study determined that generational differences were very clear regarding secularization. Their data showed that the unchurched include 48 percent Millennials, 40 percent Generation Xers, 35 percent Boomers, and 28 percent Elders.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, in regard to secularization, it is the job of the church to “embrace the churchless-whether they are following Jesus at all, as people from whom we can (and must) learn.”<sup>27</sup> A German pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “Church is the church only when it exists for others.”<sup>28</sup> The most effective tool to reach the unchurched is through love and kindness as cited in the book of Jeremiah, “With loving kindness have I drawn thee.”<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the faith community needs to understand the times and reach out to the churchless.

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<sup>25</sup>George Barna, “Five Trends among the Unchurch,” (October, 2014), <http://www.barna.org/.../culture/685-five-trends-among-the-unchurched> (accessed December 15, 2014).

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Barna, *Churchless*, 4.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Jeremiah 31:3.

## CHAPTER THREE

### IT IS TIME FOR THE CHURCH TO WAKE UP

#### Introduction

Today, millions of Millennials in America left of the church, but not their faith.

Millennials were asked in a national survey about their thoughts surrounding church and what caused them not to attend.<sup>1</sup> Their responses were:

Two in five say church is not important because they can find God elsewhere (39 percent), and one-third say it's because church is not personally relevant to them (35 percent). One in three simply said church is boring (31 percent) and one in five say it feels like God is missing from church (20 percent). Only 8 percent say they don't attend because church is "out of date," undercutting the notion that all churches need to do for Millennials is to make worship "cooler." A significant number of young adults have deeper complaints about church. More than one-third say their negative perceptions are a result of moral failures in church leadership (35 percent). Substantial majorities of Millennials who don't go to church say they see Christians as judgmental (87 percent), hypocritical (85 percent), anti-homosexual (91 percent) and insensitive to others (70 percent).<sup>2</sup>

Some still have a great love for Jesus Christ and their views on the church were positive. Their responses included:

Many say they attend church to be closer to God (44 percent) and more than one-third say they to learn more about God (37 percent). Some attend to get away from the stressfulness of daily life and to get the peace that is experienced in worship, prayer and teaching. Two-thirds of survey participants say that church is "a place to find answers to live a meaningful life." Over half say "church is relevant for my life" (54 percent), and about half "feel I can 'be myself' at church" (49 percent).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>George Barna, "What Millennials Want When They Visit Church," (March 3, 2015) <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/Millennials/711-what> (accessed January 27, 2015).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Likewise, King Solomon provides encouragement as well when he said, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, no matter what the situation, or what statistical data reflects, one does not lose sight of the promises made by God.

There is hope in the Apostle Paul’s message to the Corinthians as he noted,

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.<sup>5</sup>

With this said, certainly the church needs to proceed in faith and be prepared to disciple the Millennials, re-connect them with Christ, and then release them to their destiny in God. Hence, the church must be flexible so that it can adapt to the times and changes that are prevalent in the world. In the meantime, as the world evolves, it is important that the church remains consistent and grounded in basic Biblical principles. “Methods are many, principles are few, methods may change, but principles never do.”<sup>6</sup> Scripture declares, “Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrew 13:8).

The body of Christ remains faithful to the Gospel message and ensure that the Lord’s purpose is fulfilled.<sup>7</sup> For the most part, the church will have to find new ways to reach people wherever they are. More importantly, it will be necessary to connect with God, so that His plan

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<sup>4</sup>Proverbs 22:6.

<sup>5</sup>2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

<sup>6</sup>Elmer Towns, Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird, *11 Innovations in the Local Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007), 15.

<sup>7</sup>Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, June, 2005), 1037.

can be revealed. Therefore, if the church is to survive, they must take an immediate step to address this problem. In other words, it is time for recognize the needs of the Millennials and begin to meet those needs. Jesus gives a charge:

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.<sup>8</sup>

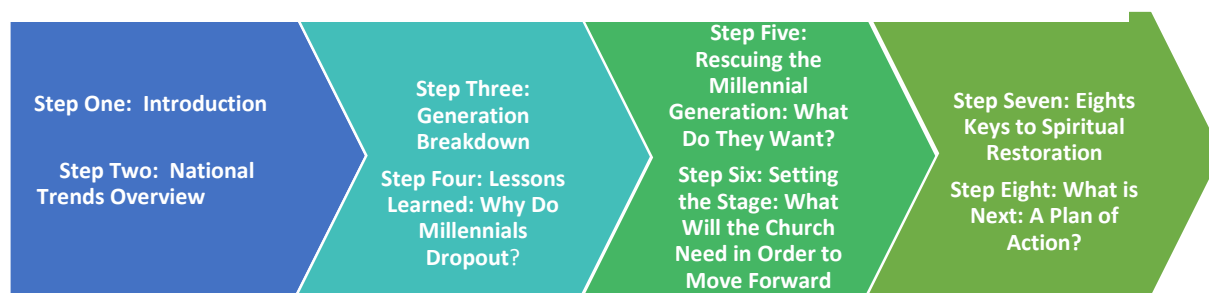
This project will define the role and purpose of the church. The church has been assigned by God to “to carry out its Lord’s will by the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>9</sup> The church is commanded to show love for the churched and unchurched. They must be concerned about the many issues that affect and impact the world and its society. Therefore, the church must be prepared to address the dropout rate among Millennials. In order for the church to be effective in this effort, they must become knowledgeable about the issues that surround the Millennial Generation. The church must be healed and delivered, so that their heart can be prepared to glorify God. When the glory of God is revealed, the church will be able to submit to God and His plan for bridging the gap with this generation.

The following eight-step module has been designed to rescue the Millennial Generation. This module will also include vital lessons learned and practical principles that will be necessary to reclaim this group.

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<sup>8</sup>Romans 13:11-14.

<sup>9</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1059.



*Figure 17: 8 Steps to Prepare the Church to Reclaim the Millennial Generation*

### National Trends Overview

There were many periods throughout history when people became unchurched and left their faith. One such time was in America when they experienced a spiritual and economic decline after the American Revolution. Because of war, many church leaders were killed, homes and farms were destroyed, and church membership declined. People turned their faces away from God, deism spread throughout the land, and sin became prevalent. One church historian wrote, “It seemed as if Christianity were about to be ushered out of the affairs of men.”<sup>10</sup> The author wrote, “What was the cure? How could any kind of spiritual antidote be applied to this dreadfully sinful disease?” According to Orr, the cure came through a “concert of prayer.”<sup>11</sup> Because of prayer, revival hit the land. Thousands of those who attended these revivals surrendered their lives to Christ, while others returned and renewed their faith. They continued to have corporal prayer and fasting meetings. During this same period, camp meetings surfaced and thousands of people traveled from faraway places to gather in outdoor settings to hear the Gospel of Jesus preached by fiery preachers. The Holy Spirit moved in such a powerful way that church

<sup>10</sup>Towns, *Worship through the Ages*, 136.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

memberships within the Methodist and Baptist churches grew by the thousands, and hundreds of churches were formed. Not only did revival spread throughout America, but abroad as well. The Great Spiritual Awakening manifested a change. It also ignited the birth of several Bible societies, a missionary societies, and Sunday school.<sup>12</sup> Great revivals, camp meetings, evangelistic campaigns, and movements continued throughout the years and they were all manifested by the word of prayer.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there have been numerous studies conducted by reputable groups and companies, which identified the Millennials concerns, issues, and problems centered on the church and their involvement.

This data must be studied in order to know what specific issues are pertinent and the direction to proceed to address them. Of course, this cannot be executed effectively without going first to God. The church will need spiritual discipline to move forward.

### Who Is the Church?

The church is mandated to facilitate the process of seeking those who are lost and evangelizing the unchurched throughout the world. Hence, the first question is, “Who is the church?” The term *church* has many meanings. It can be defined as a building, a group of believers, or a denomination.<sup>13</sup> The term church will be used throughout this project to describe a group of believers and followers of Christ. God created the church for his pleasure and glory. Therefore, the church is His people and they belong to Him.<sup>14</sup> Paul instructs the Thessalonians

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<sup>12</sup>Towns, *Worship Through the Ages*, 155.

<sup>13</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1037.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, 1048.

about giving thanks for being chosen, “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>15</sup>

The church represents one body and is headed by Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, “And He is the head of the body, the church, which is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18). Paul also indicated in 1 Corinthians 12:12, “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” Hence, as the body of Christ, we are asked to walk with one another in unity, love, and humility:

Therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.<sup>16</sup>

The church functions to portray fellowship, encouragement, and unification. The first characteristic of the church is fellowship, which details an intimate feeling and understanding for one another.<sup>17</sup> Our initial connection is with Christ and then among one another. “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.

<sup>16</sup>Ephesians 4:1-6.

<sup>17</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1037.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.



The second trait of the church is to encourage one another.<sup>19</sup> Paul wrote in a letter to the Thessalonians, “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.”<sup>20</sup>

Paul shared with the Colossians about how their souls were knitted together in love and faith. He wrote in a letter, “That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:1-3). The body of Christ is also worldwide.<sup>21</sup> Everything that might inhibit the flow of God has been dismissed. This promise is written in Colossians 3:11, “Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, neither slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”

Finally, the church is the expansion of the Lord’s presence and ministry.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the work of Christ will be accomplished by the church. In addition, Jesus came and spoke to them in the book of Mathew saying, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1059.

<sup>20</sup>1 Thessalonians 5:11.

<sup>21</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1059.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Mathew 28:18.

As the body of Christ, the church is charged to carry out the will of God through the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>24</sup> God will actually remove all barriers so that the church will be prepared when the Millennials return. Isaiah exclaimed, “Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people. Cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people” (Isaiah 62:10).

## Generation Breakdown

### The Generations

The term *generation* is defined as “a group of people defined by age boundaries—those who were born during a certain era. They share similar experiences growing up and their values and attitudes, particularly about work-related topics, tend to be similar, based on their shared experiences during their formative years.”<sup>25</sup>

The Millennials will be the largest generation in the history of the United States. However, recent data reflects that there is an urgency to address the current changes in the lives of young Americans as numbers increase to vacant the nation’s churches. Therefore, the church must get active and prepare to reach them by becoming educated about this generation. Jesus was informed and understood the culture of His day. He was able to minister effectively to the people and win them to the Kingdom of God. Hence, leaders are encouraged to sit down, talk with the Millennials, and find out who they are and what they are thinking. In these conversations, one must have an open heart and serve as the listener.

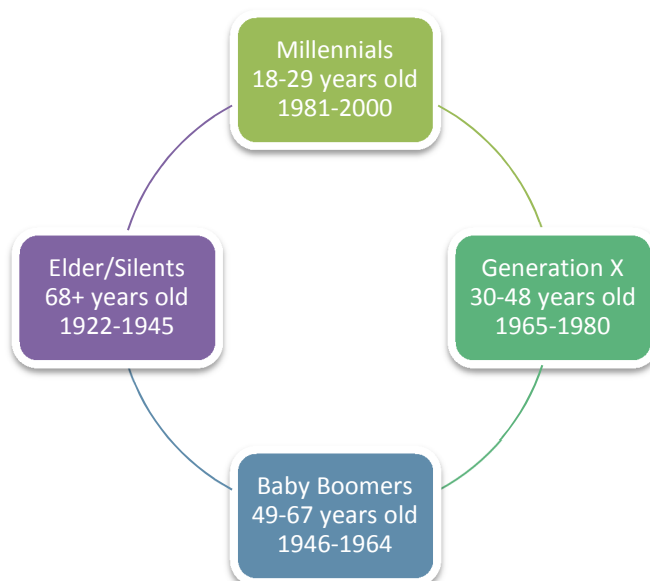
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<sup>24</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1059.

<sup>25</sup>Wiktionary contributors, “generations,” *Wiktionary, The Free Dictionary*, <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Generation>, (accessed January 23, 2015).

All generations have different qualities and personality traits. These traits are impacted by economic changes, technology, and trends that influence generational changes throughout American society. Generational differences can affect how people relate and communicate with one another. Therefore, it is important to understand and respect generational characteristics in order to bridge the gap and develop positive relationships.

The four generational groups that will be discussed are the Millennials, Generation Xers, Baby Boomers, and the Elders. The following diagram illustrates the name of each group, along with their birth dates and age span.



*Figure 18: Four Generational Groups*<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Wiktionary contributors, “generations,” *Wiktionary, The Free Dictionary*, <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Generation>, (accessed January 23, 2015).

## The Elder Generation

The first group is the Elders or the Silent Generation who were born between 1922 and 1945.<sup>27</sup> They are conformist, civic minded, and part of the Great Depression, World War II, and the Korean War. Because of their being patriotic, 24 percent are veterans.<sup>28</sup> More than 24 percent of the Elders attended college, even though the men worked and the women stayed home to raise their families.<sup>29</sup> Some moved their families from farms and cities to the suburbs. They are very detailed and disciplined individuals. They show ultimate respect for authority, conformity, and rules. The Elders focused on careers instead of activism. They established many wealthy companies and developed space programs. Different illnesses hit this generation, such as dementia, Alzheimer, smoking, and alcoholism. They created vaccines for polio, tuberculosis, etc. More importantly, many of them began using estate planning, wills, and trust funds to establish long term security for their families.

## The Baby Boomer Generation

The second group is the seventy-six million Baby Boomers who were born between 1946 and 1964.<sup>30</sup> They emerged after World War II and ended around the time the birth control pill became available. They are goal-oriented and team builders. They are less traditional, but more tuned into social justices such as the right of abortion and homosexuality. They are advocates for equality and civil rights movement. “In fact, 44 percent of them have gay friends and family

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<sup>27</sup>Matt Rosenberg, “Names of Generations”, (March, 2009), [http://geography.com.about.com/od/population\\_geography/qt/generations](http://geography.com.about.com/od/population_geography/qt/generations) (accessed March 31, 2015).

<sup>28</sup>Allison Pond, Gregory Smith and Scott Clement, “Religion among the Millennials” Pew Research Center (February 17, 2010), [www.pewforum.org/2010/02/17/religion-among-the-Millennials](http://www.pewforum.org/2010/02/17/religion-among-the-Millennials) (accessed November 22, 2014).

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Rosenberg, “Names of Generations.”

members. More than 36 percent of them attended college and 54 percent work full time. Around 13 percent of them are veterans and have even organized against the Vietnam War.”<sup>31</sup> They were the first to grow up with television and watched such programs as the Ed Sullivan Show, Happy Days, and American Bandstand. This is the era of rock and roll, transistor radios, Beatles, and the soul sounds of Motown. The Baby Boomer Generation experienced life-changing events such as the gasoline shortage and the assassinations of President John Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. A number of them control over 80 percent of personal financial assets, but 60 percent of them lost investments during the economic crisis.<sup>32</sup> As they reach retirement age, Boomers are slower to make plans for retirement and establish long-term security plans for their families.

### The Generation Xers

The third group is the 82.1 million Generation Xers who were born between 1965 and 1980.<sup>33</sup> They are known to be shrewd, yet well informed, highly educated, active, balanced, happy, and family oriented individuals. They experienced school violence, bullying, peer pressure, and broken families. They treated their parents as older friends and were pushed into adulthood early. As a result, “6 percent of them are veterans, 49 percent of them attended college, 65 percent of them are employed full time, and others work as free agents.”<sup>34</sup> During this generation, family incomes have increased even though men made less and women worked

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<sup>31</sup>Pond, “Religion among the Millennials.”

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Matt Rosenberg, “Names of Generations.”

<sup>34</sup>Pond, “Religion among the Millennials.”

more. Their worldviews are based on social changes, abuse, and the outburst of HIV/Aids. This has given them a passion for love, tolerance, and human rights for all. In addition, music videos and the sound of heavy metal emerged during this generation. In fact, 46 percent of Generation Xers have gay friends and family members. The political arena during this era was incompetent, which resulted in the Watergate and Clinton-Lewinsky scandals.<sup>35</sup> Lastly, several of them prefer to give their inheritance to charities rather than their children.

### The Millennial Generation

The fourth group is the 50 million Millennials who were born between 1981 and 2000.<sup>36</sup> They are connected to one another more than any other generation because of electronics, technology, and gadgets. Four out of ten of the Millennials have one or more tattoos and one out of four has at least one body piercing. Six out of ten Millennials were raised by both parents. As a result, the family is important to them and they have good relationships with their parents and their elders. Consequently, they tend to stay home longer. Only one out of five of them are presently married.<sup>37</sup> They are becoming the most educated generation in the history of America because of their accessibility to information. Fifty-nine percent pursue post-secondary education.<sup>38</sup> In the work field, ethics are not considered a priority; neither is fame nor fortune important. Many of the Millennials are known to change jobs frequently. Although, due to the recession only 41 percent of them work full time.<sup>39</sup> Most are team players and more radically

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<sup>35</sup>Pond, "Religion among the Millennials."

<sup>36</sup>Rosenberg, "Names of Generations."

<sup>37</sup>Pond, "Religion among the Millennials."

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Pond, "Religion among Millennials."

diverse and tolerate of others. They believe in helping the less fortunate and those in need. Some of them have homosexual or transgendered friends and 60 percent of them favor same-sex marriage.<sup>40</sup> They were greatly impacted by 9/11 and the Columbine High School shootings. Only 2 percent of them are military veterans.<sup>41</sup> On the political front, the Millennials are President Obama's greatest supporters.

The president of The Barna Group, David Kinnaman has divided the Millennials into three groups: the *nomads*, *prodigals*, and *exiles*.<sup>42</sup> The first group called *nomads* represents four out of ten Christians who left and are no longer active in the church.<sup>43</sup> They declare a love for Jesus, but not for the church. The second group is the *prodigals* represent one out of nine Millennials who were raised as a Christian, but lost their faith.<sup>44</sup> They are determined to never return to church because many of them became disillusioned by church. They believe that Christianity no longer satisfies their desires. The third group, *exiles* include two out of ten Millennials who feel stuck between the church and the world.<sup>45</sup> They want to be connected to society without giving up their faith.

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<sup>40</sup>Pond, "Religion among Millennials."

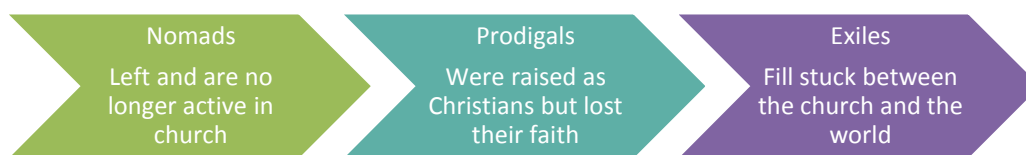
<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Barna, "Three Spiritual Journeys of Millennials."

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.



*Figure 19: Three groups of Millennials<sup>46</sup>*

In summary, the following general characteristics can be considered for these groups when you compare their differences. The Elder Generation respects authority, while Baby Boomers are hopeful, Generation Xers are doubters, and the Millennials are practical. The Elders are traditional, Baby Boomers easily fall apart, Generation Xers are latchkey kids, and Millennials believe in combined families. Educationally, the Elders are dreamers, Baby Boomers believe in birthrights, Generation Xers seeks for ways to become more educated, and the Millennials acquire incredible expenses. Over the past fifty years, society has gone from the rotary phone, to touch-tone phones, cell phones, and now the Internet, Skype, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and e-mails.<sup>47</sup> In summary, the attitudes of the generations have changed from working for everything to feeling entitled.

Consequently, technology has opened the door, which has allowed them to connect with new ways of learning and the world. Furthermore, Millennials are more rebellious than former generations as opposed to being listeners and obedient to the laws of society. Previous generations received stronger corrective punishments whereas; today's action may come in the

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<sup>46</sup>Barna, "Three Spiritual Journeys of Millennials."

<sup>47</sup>Gregg Hamill, "Mixing and Managing Four Generations of Employees," <http://www.fdu.edu/newspubs/magazine/05ws/Generations.htm> (accessed January 6, 2015).



form contemplation. Attention spans have decreased since the Elder Generation, whereas, constant reminders are needed to stay on task. Years past, marching was effective to protest unjust issues, but today Facebook is used to unify and advocate the same. Today, many handle confrontations with social media instead of using physical means. Today's challenge is to be flexible, while ascertaining, understanding and respecting generational differences, strengths, and weaknesses. The church is further charged to help the Millennials identify their spiritual purposes. When this is achieved, subsequently the church can motivate them to step into place and pursue their destiny in God.

Conclusively, "Cultivating intergenerational relationships is one of the most important ways in which effective faith communities are developing a flourishing faith in both young and old. In many churches, this means changing the metaphor from simply passing the baton to the next generation to a more functional, Biblical picture of a body – that is, the entire community of faith, across the entire lifespan, working together to fulfil God's purposes."<sup>48</sup>

#### Lessons Learned: Why Do Millennials Drop Out of Church?

What are the lessons learned that will bring the Millennials back to church? The decline in attendance reflects, "Younger members of society are being distracted because of their enormous work pressure and, with it, abundant choice for leisure, relaxation, and social activities."<sup>49</sup> Another possible reason for decreased church attendance by young adults is their "postmodernist view,' implying that they are more informed about products and services because of the greater accessibility of information."<sup>50</sup> Young adults are now in a position to

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<sup>48</sup>Hamill, "Mixing and Managing Four Generations of Employees."

<sup>49</sup>Michelle C. van der Merwe and Anske F. Grobler, "Getting Young Adults Back to Church: A Marketing Approach," *AOSIS Open Journals* 69.2 (July 2013): 1, (accessed January 4, 2015).

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

decide whether or not they want to attend services, how often to do so, and even what type of church service they would prefer to attend.<sup>51</sup> Mark Taylor, a Millennial expert who works with faculty to help them better connect with young people, suggests this movement is being driven by many college-age students who view organized religion as “strongly morally judgmental without accepting responsibility to accept truly ‘religious’ missions, like helping the poor and socially disenfranchised.”<sup>52</sup>

Another reason why Millennials indicate that they are leaving is because the church appears to be very controlling. Some feel that the church is evasive and does not deal with real life issues. A number of Millennials feel that church is not connecting with them and their needs in today’s society. Many Millennials have not been able to find Jesus in the work of the church. Others disconnect because of the theoretical differences between Christianity and science. Some feel that the church should have progressive views on sexual matters. A few do not feel safe asking questions when they are in doubt about their Christian faith.

In essence, the unchurched person will not take the time to go the church. They would rather stay home, tune into their favorite station, and hear good worship music. In essence, “sometimes progress means going backward.”<sup>53</sup> Another major complaint they express for not attending church is that many of them believe Christians are hypocritical. They see people doing one thing in the church and living a complete opposite lifestyle outside the church.

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<sup>51</sup>van der Merwe, “Young Adults Back to Church: A Marketing Approach.”

<sup>52</sup>Jamaal Abdul-Alim, “Why are Millennials Dropping Out?” *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* 29, no. 12 (July 19, 2012): 8-9, (accessed November 18, 2014).

<sup>53</sup>Browning, *Deliberate Simplicity*, 63.

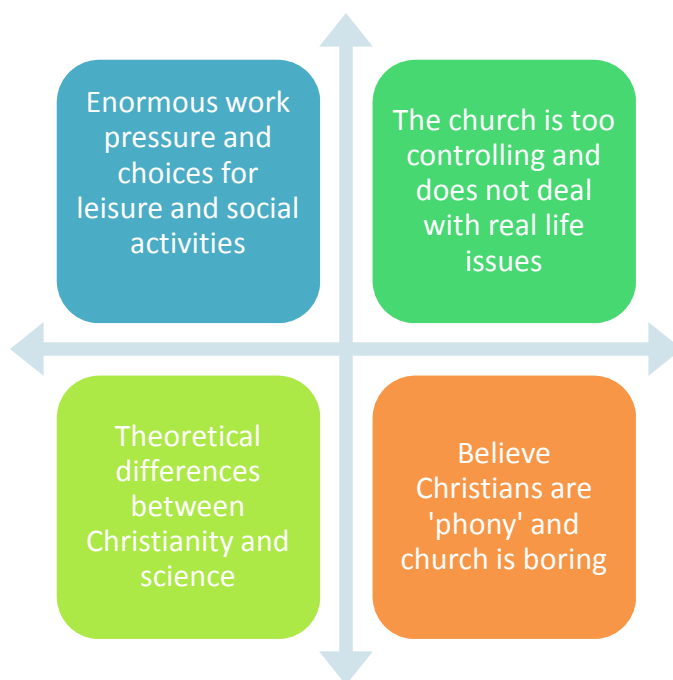
Consequently, when they do come to church, they are looking to see whether Christians are just going through the motions, or if they are truly sincere in their actions.

The church can prepare for the return of the Millennials by examining the concerns and desires that this generation has for ministry. This initiative is propelled by statistics previously mentioned, “the most potent data regarding disengagement is that a majority of twenty ‘somethings’, 61 percent of today's young adults, have been churchied at one time during their teen years, but they are now spiritually disengaged (i.e., not actively attending church, reading the Bible, or praying).”<sup>54</sup> In addition, further justification is noted by Allan Martin, who wrote, “fewer and fewer congregations have enough teens, young adults or even young couples to provide the critical mass necessary to conduct a youth group and other activities that have always been the life beat of many churches.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>George Barna and David Kinnaman, “Most Twenty-Somethings put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years” (September 11, 2006), accessed November 16, 2014, <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/16-teensnext-gen/147>.

<sup>55</sup>Alan Martin, “Burst the Bystander Effect: Making a Discipling Difference with Young Adults.” *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 3, no. 1 (Winter 2008/2009): 47-54, (accessed December 5, 2015).



*Figure 20: Lessons Learned: Why Do Millennials Drop Out of Church?<sup>56</sup>*

### Rescuing the Millennial Generation: What Do They Want from the Church?

Even though about one in every four Millennials is unaffiliated with any religion, they still would like to be known for what they stand for and not what they stand against. They want to attend a church in their immediate neighborhood. This sense of community allows them to feel the closeness, warmth, and love that they experienced in their parent and grandparent's churches. They would like to know that their friends would be welcomed to attend church without fear of being ostracized or judged.

This generation wants the church to be Christ centered, where they are able to find and feel Jesus. They want to experience growth and develop deeper relationships with God and His people. Others do not want to hear watered down sermons, but the simplistic word of Jesus

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<sup>56</sup>Barna, "Most Twenty-Somethings put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years."

Christ. The Millennials want a change in substance and not in style. Some are not interested in entertainment and trimmings, but yearn to experience the presence of the glory of God. They wish to grow spiritually and challenged to live a Godly life, not just in sex, but honesty, caring for others, etc. Millennials want to be able to participate and contribute in church activities. They desire two-way lines of communication where they will be able to talk, listen, and feel free to ask questions. They want to serve and volunteer where needed in their communities as well as globally.



*Figure 21: Rescuing the Millennial Generation: What do they want from the church?*<sup>57</sup>

Connecting with Millennials will not happen overnight. In fact, preparation is necessary. It will take a process of preparation, growth, and development over time. In addition, the different generations will need to develop relationships that depend on fellowship with Christ and it influence other people with the power to bring about change.<sup>58</sup> “We learn from one

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<sup>57</sup>Barna, “Most Twenty-Somethings put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years.”

<sup>58</sup>Larry Crabb, *Connecting* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Company, 2005), 49.

another as together we learn from God.”<sup>59</sup> Because of the training model, it is the sincere prayer that participants will be better equipped, prepared, and divinely inspired with practical principles to reclaim the Millennials.

### Setting the Stage: How Does the Church Move Forward?

The second question is: “How does the church prepare to address their issues and concerns, rethink ministry, and connect with the Millennials when they return?” The first step is to prepare the heart as David did when he said, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalms 51:10). The heart is the seat of the mind, will, and emotions. The heart must be prepared to be able to glorify God, so that man can submit to God and His plans, and seek the Savior’s honor. Solomon said, “The preparation of the heart belongs to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord” (Proverbs 16:1). The Lord will renew the heart and fill it with new desires, purposes, affections, and joy. Ezekiel wrote, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

The second step is to cry out. David said, “The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles” (Psalms 34:17). Throughout Scripture, God promises that he will hear a cry of distress, help, war, and strong voice. These cries of His people are answered when they are humbled, helpless, desperate, yielded, and sincere. He answers these cries with healing, deliverance, victory, help, restoration, and revival.

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<sup>59</sup>Jerry Bridges, *Growing Your Faith* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Company, 2004), 2.

### What Will the Church Need in Order to Move Forward?

The third question is: “What will the church need in order to move forward?” The church will need spiritual discipline to move forward. Spiritual discipline is an inner attitude of the heart that brings people into reality with their spiritual life.<sup>60</sup> Spiritual change occurs as God is allowed to transform His people through the following sources: worship, prayer, meditation, fasting, repentance, Scripture, discipleship, fellowship and love. The closer people come to the heartbeat of God, the more they will see their needs and have a desire to be conformed like Christ.<sup>61</sup> The church should model the spiritual aspects of true Christianity. Actions speak louder than words; therefore Christians should be able to live, as Jesus would want them to do. James declares, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22).

### The Prodigal Son

The parable of the Prodigal Son will serve as one of the foundational Scriptures for which the keys for Church preparation will be based. According to Luke 15:11-32, the story begins with a son who asked his father for an early inheritance. The father honored his son’s wish, but his son soon lost it all with lavish living. Shortly thereafter, a famine hit the land and the son was forced to take a job working with swine. He became very hungry yet no one would give him anything to eat. At this point he realized how foolish he had been. Specifically, Scripture says that he came to his senses, “But when he came to himself” (Luke 15:17). He later decided to go back home, repent to his father, and volunteer to work as his servant. The father looked up, saw his son coming back home, ran out to meet him, and gave him a big kiss. Before the son could

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<sup>60</sup>Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline – The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998).

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

finish repenting, his father began to shower him with gifts and began to plan a big celebration. The son that had always been home became very angry about the celebration. At this point, it was not about the son that had stayed home, but the other son who had been lost and now found.

First, as the parable is reviewed, it was very disrespectful for the son to ask for his birthright prior the death of his parents. Despite this custom, the father did not rebuke him, but gave the son his inheritance. Second, even after the son squandered his inheritance and returned home, his father never pressured him, but received him back with a forgiving heart, gifts, and a celebration feast. In this parable, the Father is symbolic of God who is love, patience, and compassion. God is the perfect example for earthly fathers. On the other hand, bitterness kept the older son from forgiving his brother. In essence, this son represented the self-righteous Pharisees who had forgotten to celebrate when the lost returns to God with a forgiving heart. The act of humility from the father and resentment from the son serves as a model for how to respond to those who repent and return to God. Therefore, the behavior of the older son shows what should not be displayed when the Millennials return to God. Most importantly, the father models the love that should be shared with those who return home.

In summary, the Lord continues to bestow grace with His mercy and never treats people the way they deserve to be treated. The story supports Scripture where it is stated that God will give those who left Him a heart to return back home. As recorded in Jeremiah 24:7, "I will give them a heart to know me, for I am the Lord; and their God, for they will return to me with their whole heart." In addition, the characteristics that were displayed by the father in this parable will serve as the keys that will prepare the Church to connect with the Millennials when they return to the church. What role will the church play in this effort? Will they take on the attitude of the



oldest son who was angry and unforgiving? Certainly not, they will model the father who seeks to bring restoration to his son through love.

Restoration of the church and its people will come through prayer. An example of this promise of restoration is found in the book of 2 Chronicles. The story is recorded when the Lord gave King Solomon a warning after he built the temple. The Lord advised Solomon that His blessings were conditional, but gave him a promise in the following prayer, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”<sup>62</sup> God called to His people, the church to do four things: humble themselves, pray, seek His face, and turn from their wicked ways. Then, God told Solomon that if the people were obedient and did these four things, He will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land. This is the promise for today, having faith that God will bring healing, deliverance, and restoration to those who are lost.

### Eight Keys for Spiritual Restoration

The future of the 21<sup>st</sup> century church is dismal. Therefore they must take immediate action to address the critical decline in church membership and participation among the Millennial Generation. Many have suggested that the church needs to return to basic and simplistic principles. The keys that will be used to prepare the church will be Biblical principles. Spiritual principles are the truths that one needs for living a Christian life. These principles are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual principles are found throughout Scripture and provide the ingredients that are needed to grow and mature in a relationship with God. Spiritual principles were identified in the Scripture associated with the parable of the Prodigal Son found

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<sup>62</sup>2 Chronicles 7:14.

in Luke 15. Other principles were identified from the prayer (2 Chronicles 14) that the Lord shared with King Solomon after he completed the temple. These principles include, love, prayer, and humility, seeking the Lord, worship, repentance, and the Word of God. These principles will prepare the church to be restored, strengthened, and released to move forward to develop relationships and sensitivity towards the needs and concerns of the Millennial Generation. As the principles are incorporated, the church will renew an oneness with God, so that they will be able to follow His instructions.



*Figure 22: Keys for Spiritual Restoration*

#### Key 1: Love

Love is the main component in this model to prepare the church for the return of the Millennial Generation. All other keys are centered on the foundation of love and will not be effective without the other. According to the book of Ephesians, “With all humility and

gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”<sup>63</sup> Likewise, Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians and said, “And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”<sup>64</sup> Remember in the parable of the Prodigal Son, it was because of love from the father that he was able to receive his son back home with compassion, forgiveness, gifts, and a celebration. The church has to be ready and prepared to effectively minister to the Millennial Generation in love when they return. If the church is not ready, then they will either go to another church or not. The Lord spoke to Jeremiah and said, “The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying, ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you.’”<sup>65</sup>

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. However, whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.<sup>66</sup>

God’s love is made up of four attributes: benevolence, grace, mercy, and persistence.<sup>67</sup> The first attribute, benevolence is an unselfish concern and care for others to include friends, neighbors, and even enemies. The Lord demonstrated His greatest love towards mankind when he proclaimed, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”<sup>68</sup> The second attribute is grace

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<sup>63</sup>Ephesians 4:2-3.

<sup>64</sup>1 Corinthians 13:2.

<sup>65</sup>Jeremiah 31:3.

<sup>66</sup>1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

<sup>67</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 318.

which God provides man with His goodness, not based on what he deserves, but because of their needs.<sup>69</sup> “God’s mercy is his tenderhearted, loving compassion for his people. It is his tenderness of heart toward the needy.”<sup>70</sup> Jesus traveled “teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness” (Matthew 9:35-36). The last attribute is persistence, which includes long-suffering and patience.

## Key 2: Humility

An important attitude mentioned in Scripture is humility. Humility is defined as being grounded in the character of God. First, Jesus was exalted by God and in turn He exalted man. According to the book of Philippians, “Wherefore God also hath exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.”<sup>71</sup> Jesus placed a great emphasis on humility and taught lessons on it throughout the Bible. Humble people see themselves as being small before God and man. He owes his very existence to the grace of God. It is written in Philippians 2:5-8,

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. In addition, being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

A humble man is also excited about the positive strengths and welfare of others. They are humble towards one another. Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 5:5, “Likewise, you who are

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<sup>68</sup>John 3:16.

<sup>69</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 321.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid, 322.

<sup>71</sup>Philippians 2:9-10.

younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” The test of humility is when a person is able to become humble before not only God but man as well. Paul writes to the Romans and says, “Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.”<sup>72</sup> The results of humility are:

Results of Humility	Scripture Reference
The Lord adorns the humble with salvation.	“For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation” (Psalm 149:4).
The humble will receive wisdom.	“When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom” (Proverbs 11:2).
The Lord will exalt the humble.	“Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and He will exalt you” (James 4:10).
Sins will be acknowledged by others.	You will gain wealth and honor, and the fear of the Lord bring wealth and honor and life (Proverbs 22:4).

The steps of humility are:

Steps of Humility	Scripture Reference
Fear the Lord.	“By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life” (Proverbs 22:4).
Humble oneself in His presence.	“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” (James 4:10).
Acknowledge one’s sins to others.	“For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body” (James 3:2).

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<sup>72</sup> Romans 12:16.

Take wrong patiently.	“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing” (1 Peter 3:8-10).
Submit to authority.	Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh (1 Peter 2:18).

True humility exists when one dies completely to self and depends solely on the power of the Holy Spirit. It is at the point of sincere lowliness that they become a vehicle to manifest the divine glory of God.

### Key 3: Prayer

The next key is prayer. The Lord instructs them to pray, “Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18: 1). Prayer is communicating with God in simple everyday language. It is written in Matthew 6:7, “And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathens do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.” Prayer allows one to talk to God, develop, and maintain a close relationship with Him. It gives them an understanding of His word and enables them to reproduce after His character. According to Apostle Paul writing to Timothy, “I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”<sup>73</sup> “Prayer is intimacy with God that leads to the fulfillment of His purpose.”<sup>74</sup> The Holy Spirit will teach

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<sup>73</sup>1 Timothy 2:1-4.

people how to pray, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered.”

Ordinary concerns can be brought directly to God when the prayer is simple and from the heart. When they meet the Father, they are able to fall into His arms and He in turn sings sweet love songs to them. He leads them to a deeper understanding and practices of prayer, which allows them to become closer to Him, to themselves, and to their community.<sup>75</sup> Jean-Nicholas Grou says, “It is the heart that prays, it is to the voice of the heart that God listens and it is the heart that he answers.”<sup>76</sup>

Jesus often shared and modeled the importance of prayer with His disciples. He was very passionate and consistent. The ministry of the disciples was birthed in prayer.<sup>77</sup> “Prayer is not a preface or an addendum to the work of ministry. It is the work of the ministry.”<sup>78</sup> A powerful prayer to begin with is the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus taught His disciples in this manner,

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Henderson, *Transforming Prayer*, 23.

<sup>75</sup>Richard J. Foster, *Prayer, Finding the Heart’s True Home* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992).

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup>Daniel Henderson, *Fresh Encounters – Experiencing Transformation Through United Worship-Based Prayer* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2008), 67.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup>Matthew 6:9-13.

The Lord's Prayer, often called the model prayer was written with great influence. It was designed so that people could go into the heart of God to recognize who He is and what He had done for them. As the Lord's Prayer is accepted, the church must first obey the instructions on how to approach God who is the Father.<sup>80</sup> Jesus has given the invitation to "come unto me" (Matthew 11:28). The "Father seeks such to worship him" (John 4:23). There is access to Christ as they approach His throne. "We have immediate access to him who is everywhere" (Psalm 139:8). There is an intimate and oneness with God for whomever wants to make Him real in their heart. He is concerned about the needs of the church and demands that they obey and give Him reverence. When this is done, then the glory of God will be revealed in the midst of the local church, life trials, and tribulations.<sup>81</sup> In this, the attributes of God are recognized. He is found to be "merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, and forgiving of sin."<sup>82</sup>

There are other types of prayers that have different functions and can be used depending on the issue or situation. Just a few include,

Types of Prayers	Scripture Reference
Asking prayers	"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7-8).
Praying with others	"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19).
Deliverance prayers	"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).
Faith prayers	"And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:15).

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<sup>80</sup>Elmer Towns, *Praying the Lord's Prayer for Spiritual Break through* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997).

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Exodus 34:6-7.



Foremost, when prayer is released, the glory of God is effective. When prayer is passionate, transformation takes place personally and corporately. God wants the church to praise and give him glory. There have been great revivals because of prayer. These revivals released spiritual explosions worldwide. As a result, “thousands of people turned from sinful behavior to embrace righteousness and holy living. Broken lives were mended and crushed relationships were restored.”<sup>83</sup> Similarly, worship was changed during Pentecost. This allowed man to take worship outside the building and focus on Jesus in their hearts.<sup>84</sup>

#### Key 4: Seek the Lord

God invites His people to seek Him. “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). Seeking God details taking all the attention away from self, then focusing on the awesomeness of God. “It aims at appropriately expressing God’s nature, and not as satisfying its own feelings.”<sup>85</sup> There is a longing to reverence Him, just because He is holy. Eventually, there develops a connection of intimacy with God and one receives an assurance of His love.

In addition, meditation is a very important and should be a part of prayer and worship. It means to “focus one’s thoughts on, to reflect on or ponder over; to plan or project in the mind.”<sup>86</sup> The purpose of meditation is to get still before the Lord so that a person can hear and understand what He is speaking into their spirit. Once they receive their instructions from Him, then they are free to go forth and follow His commands. Therefore, because of their obedience, they will have

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<sup>83</sup>Towns, *Worship through the Ages*, 47.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1066.

<sup>86</sup>Towns, *How to Pray*, 178.

good success in what they do. When the Lord gave Joshua specific instructions for leadership after the death of Moses when he said, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”<sup>87</sup> At this point, when one has totally surrendered to God, there is peace and an assurance through faith that He will provide and handle their every need.

#### Key 5: Worship

Worship is described as “The loving ascription of praise to God for what He is both in Himself and His ways. It is the bowing of the innermost spirit in deep humility and reverence before Him.”<sup>88</sup> The Lord seeks true worshipers. David proclaims in (John 4:23), “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.” Biblical worship encompasses one’s heart and love of God to worship Him in spirit and in truth.<sup>89</sup>

Through the centuries, there have been periods of great encounters with God.<sup>90</sup> These experiences were called revivals or Great Awakenings. God used a host of people to usher in innovations that still impact the way they express corporate worship. Such men as Moody and Sankey contributed to “worship evangelism” by moving outside the walls of the church to reach the unsaved. During these periods of awakening, new methods, styles, processes, and techniques

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<sup>87</sup>Joshua 1:8.

<sup>88</sup>Henderson, *Transforming Prayer*, 27.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 5.

of worship emerged.<sup>91</sup> Sometimes God's people emerge from awakenings expressing their love for him in completely new ways. When church members experience such awakenings, their lives are always changed, communities are transformed, families are restored, and people turn from wickedness to righteousness.

The church has experienced many innovative ways to worship God. God is not just calling for better worship, but a personal relationship with him.<sup>92</sup> In the book of Philippians it states, "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death."<sup>93</sup> True knowledge of Christ alters and changes man, their judgments, and manners, and makes them brand new. "Being the crown of God's creation, worship was created deep inside the heart of man. God wanted a vibrant relationship with his best creation and desired to dwell with those he loved. He not only wants us to have a worship life, but God wants us to have Him."<sup>94</sup> Worship is in the heart of men, women, and every movement of God. Church members will grow when their relationship with God is characterized by an attitude and practice of worship that has become a daily lifestyle and practice.

#### Key 6: Repentance

Repentance means to feel sorrow over sin and turn away in both the mind and heart from self to God. Ezekiel 18:30 states, "Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge each one according

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<sup>91</sup>Henderson, *Transforming Prayer*.

<sup>92</sup>Elmer L. Towns and Vernon M. Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2012).

<sup>93</sup>Philippians 3:10.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

to his way, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall.” It was a command from God that all people repent so that they would be able to see and enter into the Kingdom of God, Acts 17:30, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” Then Jesus said, “The time has come. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”<sup>95</sup> A call to repentance is found in Hosea 6:1-3,

Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight. Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter *and* former rain to the earth.

#### Key 7: Fasting

Throughout the history of the Bible, fasting along with prayer has proven to be extremely beneficial and necessary for church development. It is a skill to learn, an art to acquire, and an ability that needs to be trained. The greatest reason to fast is to get to know God and to feed on the Bread of Life. When you fast, you begin to sample God by praying and listening to him. One of the primary purposes of fasting is to provide healing and rest for the body.<sup>96</sup> Because of fasting, the body is detoxified and rid of both physical and spiritual impurities.

Moreover, fasting will enable a person’s faith and trust to grow in God. One’s spiritual authority in the Holy Spirit will be increased. It will provide divine guidance, direction, and affirmation of ministry. Fasting will give spiritual insights during Bible study, enhance one’s desire to pray, and increase a personal sense of God’s presence.<sup>97</sup> As important, with the increase

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<sup>95</sup>Mark 1:15

<sup>96</sup>Elmer L. Towns, *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough*, 20.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

of demonic activity throughout the world, they will witness an assurance of divine protection and have victory over satanic strongholds.<sup>98</sup> When time is spent with God in prayer, they will find that a new spiritual hunger replaces the old physical desire. As important, when the secret art of fasting is found in the heart of God, one will get the victory in Jesus and enjoy His peace.<sup>99</sup>

Fasting takes on additional facets other than the absence of food. True fasting includes planning, preparation, and purposely seeking the Lord. In order to be successful, Dr. Elmer Towns suggest the following steps,

Fasting Steps	Scripture Reference
“Plan Your Prayer Time” <sup>100</sup>	This prayer time should be structured to include the specific place or area, the length of prayer time, and content of Bible Study
“Take a Spiritual Inventory Before Fast” <sup>101</sup>	Identify strengths and weaknesses, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24)
“Confess Every Known Sin” <sup>102</sup>	“The Lord requires that we confess our sins, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (Leviticus 26:40-42)
“Ask God to Teach You the Word as You Study and Fast” <sup>103</sup>	“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15)
“Ask God to Fill You with the Holy Spirit” <sup>104</sup>	“For as many are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (Romans 8:14)

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<sup>98</sup>Towns, *Fasting for a Spiritual Breakthrough*, 121.

<sup>99</sup>Elmer L. Towns, *Knowing God through Fasting* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., 2002).

<sup>100</sup>Ibid, 22.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid, 23.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid, 24.

“Yield Yourself Fully to the Lord Jesus Christ” <sup>105</sup>	“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2)
“Ask for Faith” <sup>106</sup>	God speaks in Jeremiah 33:3, “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know
“Be Aware of Spiritual Oppositions and Temptation” <sup>107</sup>	Be sober-minded; be watchful Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8)

### Key 8: Study the Word of God

The job of the church is to spiritually challenge, instruct, and refresh the congregation through practical Bible teaching. The Word, who was God, has been around since creation. Apostle John noted, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). God inspired Scripture that was given to man for wisdom, so that he would be complete and ready to do a good job for Him. Apostle Paul wrote, “And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

The word of God will judge the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Paul states, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Towns, *Knowing God through Fasting*, 25.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”<sup>108</sup>

Also, God speaks to His people through the Bible, “the expression of God’s will to us, possess the right supremely to define what we are to believe and how we are to conduct ourselves.”<sup>109</sup>

The Scripture gives one patience and comfort. “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”<sup>110</sup> God speaks to His people through the Bible as it provides spiritual food on the truths of faith.

When prayer is united with the word of God, it generates boldness in one’s life. “After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.” Whenever a person is confronted by the evil one, the word of God will make them strong. It is written in 1 John 2:14, “I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.” For the most part, the word of God is completely reliable, enlightening, and direct. It will guide one through darkness to all truths. David said, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”<sup>111</sup>

In summary, the good news is that the Lord can turn any situation around. No matter what people or statistics reflect, there is nothing impossible with God. “For with God nothing will be impossible” (Luke 1:37). God is coming to repossess His Church, but they have to be hungry for this to happen. Every good thing that the church does should flow from the presence

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<sup>108</sup>Hebrews 4:12.

<sup>109</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 267.

<sup>110</sup>Romans 15:4.

<sup>111</sup>Psalms 119:105.

of God. God wants the church to be so saturated with His presence and glory that they carry it everywhere they go. He wants them to dwell with Him in intimate communion, but the flesh must first die.<sup>112</sup> They can be so caught up in being “religious” that they never become spiritual. The church can get prepared for His presence through repentance. Repentance makes the road of the heart straight, builds up every low place, and takes down every high place in life and church families. When this happens, the church will see people walk through the doors of repentance, one after another, and experience the glory and the presence of God. “The next wave of true revival will bring waves of unchurched people. When they hear that there is fresh bread in the house, they will run through the doors after smelling the fragrance of God.”<sup>113</sup>

#### What is Next: A Plan of Action?

Participants will design a strategic plan that will adapt to future challenges, develop core strategies, goals, and objectives.<sup>114</sup> Allison and Kaye in their book titled *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations* designed the following seven step model to enhance organization management and address special needs.<sup>115</sup> This model will help the church set priorities and acquire the resources needed to achieve their goals.

Seven Practical Phases for Developing a Strategic Plan <sup>116</sup>
Get Ready. This requires that you determine reasons and process for planning.
Articulate mission, vision, and values. Speak and write your vision.

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<sup>112</sup>Tommy Tenney, *The God Chasers* (Shippensburg, PA.: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., 1998).

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup>Michael Allison and Jude Kaye, *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., April 2005).

<sup>115</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*



Assess Your Situation. Review past and present operations and strategies.
Agree on Priorities. Analyze data and progress.
Write the Strategic Plan. Establish goals and objectives.
Implement the Strategic Plan. Put the plan into action.
Evaluate and Monitor the Strategic Plan. Review and update the plan.

Humans are limited, but God is the final authority regarding all religious matter. God has established the principles, beliefs, and practices that Christians must follow. God's directives are found in the Bible, which is the vehicle by which he speaks. "The Biblical view is that God is guiding history to his goal and that we can have assurance that if we align ourselves with His purpose, we will be moving to an assured outcome of history."<sup>117</sup> It is written in Proverbs 19:21 that "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."

The work of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life is a continuous process. The Holy Spirit empowers a believer to do the work of the Lord. John 14:12 states, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to my Father." Whatever the instructions are that God has assigned the church, He has already given them the power to fulfill it.

Therefore, since the assignment is from God, He has the directions and strategic plan of action. To execute God's plan, it is necessary for the church to walk in the Spirit. Hence, the Holy Spirit will guide them into all truths as written in John 16:13-14, "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will

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<sup>117</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 371.

glorify me, for He will take of what is mine and declare it to you.” As the church walks in the Spirit, God produces the fruit of Spirit within them, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”<sup>118</sup> The church will never be successful in fulfilling God’s plan without the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit. Hence, hope and the fruit of the Spirit needs to be renewed so that God can reveal His plan for joining and working with the next generation.

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<sup>118</sup>Galatians 5:22-23.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **A TRAINING MODEL**

#### Preparing the Church With Practical Principles to Rescue the Millennial Generation

This training model will prepare the church for change. Change is Biblical, but unfortunately many churches struggle today in many ways because they refuse to alter their practices. Church leaders must serve as change agents. “Their service in ministry positions represents the cause of the Lord by bringing about the change.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus called for an inner change of the heart, which will produce a change in lifestyle (Luke 19:1-10). As the Millennial Generation changes, so must the church be prepared to meet the challenges of today’s society.

This twelve hour training model is designed to address two areas. The first section will address and educate the church on the recent information, beliefs, practices, and directions of the Millennial Generation. A culmination of this information will summarize the lessons learned from research, surveys, and other pertinent literature. The second section will present basic biblical principles that will provide an opportunity for participants to receive a spiritual transformation.

**Goal:** The goal of this training model is to prepare the church for change to address issues that are relevant to the Millennials with commitment, confidence, self-assurance, and love.

**Training Objectives:** After the completion of the lesson, participants will be able to: (1) obtain knowledge about the trends and issues relative to the Millennials, (2) discuss strategies for addressing some of the challenges and ways to bridge the gap for relationship development between the church and the Millennials, and (3) design a plan of action that will be implemented

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<sup>1</sup>George Barna, *Leaders on Leadership* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997).

within their church.

**Program Participants:** There will be three groups targeted for participation. The first group will include church leadership consisting of pastors, ministerial staff, elders, deacons, deaconess, trustee board members, and church administrative staff. The second group will be ministry leaders to include all auxiliary leaders and assistants. The third group will include all other church members.

**Training Methods/Procedures/Activities:** Several different methods of instruction will be used to include lecture, brainstorming, visual aids, worksheets, compare and contrast, demonstration, etc. Participants will be asked to discover, ask questions, and participate in discussions.

**Conclusion:** Students will be encouraged to think more globally, and develop a plan of action for future implementation.



*Figure 23: Eight Steps to Prepare the Church to Reclaim the Millennial Generation*

## Eight Steps to Prepare the Church to Reclaim the Millennial Generation

### Step One: Introduction

Scripture Reference: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

This session will provide an overview of the millions of Millennials in America that have fallen away from the institution of the church but not their faith. It will cover the rise of churchlessness throughout the United States based on a recent study by the Barna Group and other researchers. Steps will be presented on how to use the Gospel message with God’s plan to reach the millennial generation.

### Step Two: National Trends Overview

Scripture Reference: “Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, their families, by their fathers’ houses, according to the number of names, every male individually” (Numbers 1:2).

This session will present random surveys were conducted by the Barna Group, the Gallup Team, and the Pew Research Group. They are highly recognized research organizations that provide accurate information that address faith issues. Surveys are nothing new and they were taken during biblical times. The church can prepare for the return of the Millennials by examining their concerns and desires for ministry as reported in data. Another nationally recognized research group, The LifeWay Research Team under the direction of Dr. Thom Rainer conducted a study of 1,200 Millennials in the United States. The findings from this study serve as the basics for a book titled, *The Millennials: Connecting to America’s Largest Generation*, written by Dr. Rainer and his son, Jess Rainer. The study found that,

Sixty-five percent of Millennials identify themselves as Christian, while 14 percent say

they are atheist or agnostic, 14 percent list no religious preference, and 8 percent claim other religions. Thirty-one percent of Millennials pray by themselves at least once a day, while 20 percent never pray. Only 8 percent pray with others on a daily basis, compared with 65 percent that rarely or never pray with other people. Sixty-seven percent of Millennials say they rarely or never read the Bible or other sacred writings. Only 8 percent read the Bible on a daily basis, although, in total, 21 percent do so at least once a week, and 34 percent do so at least once a month. One in four Millennials attends religious worship services once a week or more, but two out of three rarely or never visit a church, synagogue, mosque, or temple. Twenty percent meet with others at least monthly in a small group to study the Bible, but 80 percent rarely or never do so. A slight majority (53 percent) disagree (strongly or somewhat) that the Bible is the written Word of God and is totally accurate in all it teaches.<sup>2</sup>

Demographically, the most recent spiritual profile and data for the Washington, DC area was reported by the Barna Group. Their findings are very similar to the national findings and revealed the following statistical data,

Of those surveyed, 75 percent identify as being Christians, 15 percent declared no faith, 7 percent professed other faiths, and 17 percent were secularized. Church attendance varied by 38 percent being very active and attends weekly, 14 percent are somewhat active by attending monthly, and those who only attend for special occasions reflect 12 percent. However, some surveyed, identified as de-church because they had not attended church in the past six months at 26 percent while others who were never churched totaled 11 percent. Many who were engaged in faith tallied 78 percent that pray to God, 37 percent read their Bible, 23 percent volunteers at Church, 20 percent attend Adult Sunday School, and 21 percent attend Small Group discussions. In all, 36 percent of those who reside in the Washington, DC area declare to be born-again Christians and 21 percent read the Bible weekly.<sup>3</sup>

### Step Three: Generation Breakdown

Scripture Reference: “The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all Generations” (Psalm 33:11).

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<sup>2</sup>Rob Phillips, “Research: Millennials are Spiritually Diverse” (April 27, 2010), accessed February 26, 2015, [www.lifeway.com/...Research...Millennials-are-spiritually-diverse](http://www.lifeway.com/...Research...Millennials-are-spiritually-diverse).

<sup>3</sup>Barna Group, *Barna: Cities 2015*, accessed January 16, 2015, <https://www.barna.org/research/barna-reports/436>.

This session will present the generational characteristics of the Millennials, Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and the Elders. The Elder Generation respects authority, while Baby Boomers are hopeful, Generation Xers are doubters, and the Millennials are practical. The Elders are traditional, Baby Boomers easily fall apart, Generation Xers are latchkey kids, and Millennials believe in combined families. Educationally, the Elders are dreamers, Baby Boomers believe in birthrights, Generation Xers seeks for ways to become more educated, and the Millennials acquire incredible expenses. Over the past fifty years, society has gone from the rotary phone, to touch-tone phones, cell phones, and now the Internet, Skype, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and e-mails.<sup>4</sup> The attitudes of the generations have changed from working for everything to feeling entitled. The individual differences as well as similarities among people and generation groups will be reviewed. In order to bridge the gap between the generations, one must be able to recognize and respect the differences.

#### Step Four: Lessons Learned: Why Do Millennials Drop Out?

This session will present several reasons why millennials drop out of the church. Many of them are more connected to technology, which provides them with information to make other religious choices. Their scope of friends is more global and they become influenced by their atheist and agnostic views. Others say, “Christianity does not offer deep, thoughtful or challenging answers to life in in a complex culture.”<sup>5</sup> Many times the original purpose of the church disappears. Some feel that their spiritual needs are not being met. Often times the church become impersonal and people feel detached.

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<sup>4</sup>Gregg Hamill, “Mixing and Managing Four Generations of Employees,” <http://www.fdu.edu/newspubs/magazine/05ws/Generations.htm> (accessed January 6, 2015).

<sup>5</sup>Barna, “Five Reasons Millennials Leave the Church.”

### Step Five: Rescuing the Millennial Generation: What Do They Want?

Scripture Reference, “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4).

This session will cover what the Millennials want in a church. They want the church to be friendlier, so that they can experience an atmosphere of feeling welcomed and loved. They want the church to be real, honest, open, transparent, and accept the younger generation for who they are. Some want a church online. They want the church to become creative and incorporate technology into sermons and Bible sessions. Others want a church that seeks to support outside causes through evangelistic efforts. They want a church that is committed to the family. Many are more interested in developing relationships instead of participating in fancy programs. They also want to glean wisdom from seasoned saints. Millennials want to be included in the decision making process of the church. For the most part, they want the church to be Christ-centered.

### Step Six: Set the Stage: How to Move Forward.

Scripture Reference: “I will cry out to God Most High, to God who performs all things for me” (Psalm 57:2)

This session will provide steps on what is necessary for the church to move forward. The church needs to be flexible so that they will be prepared to disciple the Millennials back to Christ. The church must be able to cry out to God and receive a renewed heart so that they will be able to address the issues and concerns of the Millennials. The parable of the prodigal son teaches us that the Lord loves the person that has sinned, as well as the one who has not sinned. Hence, the lesson learned is that people should follow the example of the father who displayed compassion instead of judgement. Therefore, when the Millennials return it is important that the church be ready to accept them back with joy and a loving heart.



Also, as mentioned earlier in 2 Chronicles 7:14, the Lord promised His people healing if they followed His instructions. Many people in the church are suffering due to mental, physical and spiritual illnesses. They must get well in order to be effective witnesses to others. Therefore, this act of obedience will bring forth revival, restoration and a renewed spirit which will be necessary in order to have an open mind to minister to the millennial generation.

### Step Seven: Eight Keys to Spiritual Restoration

Scripture Reference: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me (Psalm 51:10).

This session will cover the spiritual disciplines that will transform God’s people through the following sources: worship, prayer, meditation, fasting, repentance, Scripture, discipleship, fellowship and love. The closer people come to the heartbeat of God, the more they will see their needs and have a desire to be conformed like Christ.<sup>6</sup> People must search their hearts to determine whether they have had a true experience with God. Others will see that God is real because they will see the power demonstrated. Without the evidence of God’s genuineness, the church will be inefficient in their attempts to reach the world. The church must prepare for change, be intentional in developing relationships, and move to develop a plan of action that will incorporate the wisdom of the old and strength of the young.

### Step Eight: What is Next: A Plan of Action?

Scripture Reference: “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it” (Habakkuk 2:2).

The participants will break up into small groups and share in a brainstorming exercise. They

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<sup>6</sup>Barna, “Five Reasons Millennials Leave the Church.”

will develop an action plan to address issues regarding the Millennials. Every person within the church is different and unique. Therefore, no two people will develop the same plan. However, each person should be able to make a significant contribution to this joint effort.

Now that participants have been spiritually renewed, they are to allow the Holy Spirit to open their heart and release what the Lord is speaking to them. Further, they will discuss and answer the following questions to formulate their plans:

Questions for Discussion
Where does the church go from here regarding the Millennials?
What can the church do to make a difference in bridging the gap between them and the Millennials?
How can the church seek a fresh model to reclaim this generation?
Has the methods and programs of the church been assessed and updated to make sure that they are relevant for the generation?
Has the church embraced technology and social media in the worship service and other areas in the church?
How can the church prepare other members in the church for the return of the millennial generation?
What type of evangelistic efforts will the church use to go out and reclaim the Millennials?
How will the church continue to grow and develop spiritually?

The following chart is used to complete a plan of action as described by Michael Allison and Jude Kaye in their book *Strategic Planning for Non-Profit Organizations*.

*Table 3: Action Plan*<sup>7</sup>

ACTION PLAN	
Steps	Action
Get Ready.	
Articulate mission, vision, and values.	
Assess your situation.	
Agree on Priorities.	
Write the Strategic Plan.	
Implement the Strategic Plan.	
Evaluate and Monitor the Strategic Plan.	

This Training Model will provide the information, applicable activities, and

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<sup>7</sup>Allison, *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations*.

evaluative tools for participants to receive spiritual renewal. Sessions will cover how the world has changed and become very culturally diverse. It is important for the church to learn the culture so that they will be able to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in an effective way. Typically the church deals with the millennials in an authoritative manner, rather than bringing them together with all age groups to explore common goals. On the other hand technology is creating a disconnection with people, but access to global.<sup>8</sup> The theological foundations of many faithful millennials is become unstable and insecure.<sup>9</sup> The Christian faith that was once very popular in previous generations has changed in the community, church, public schools, and family. Many of them have dismissed religious practices with their institutions. There needs to be a new innovative way to address Christian faith issues. This can be cultivated by developing intentional relationships among all generational groups. When the church is restored spiritually, then their heart will be prepared to strive towards methods to connect and reclaim an unchurched generation.

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<sup>8</sup>Kinnaman, *You Lost Me*, 14.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

The fact remains that Millennials who were very active as teenagers in the ministry are dropping out of church in great numbers. There are some churches that are attracting Millennials but the number is small when compared to the population of that community. Also churches that have millennial members are struggling trying to keep them active and connected. Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources also confirms in his study that religion among the Millennials is declining. Dr. Rainer indicates that,

With fewer people attending worship services or praying with other faith adherents, it is not surprising that the religious landscape of our culture is changing with the maturation of the Millennials. Millennials are the most religiously diverse Generation in our culture's history. Unsure of the afterlife and the life of Jesus, Millennials present the church with a great opportunity to engage them in conversations dealing with the nature of truth and its authority as God.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, if the church endeavors to bridge the gap that is prevalent between the church and unchurched, they must take a concerted effort to learn their culture and how to communicate with them.<sup>2</sup> As important, it is necessary to understand their pain, concerns, and desires. One of the many lessons learned about the Millennials:

Most young adults go through a search for significance, seeking to discern meaning, purpose, and truth in Life. Because their cultural context has made life incredibly complex and has removed most of the anchors and guide post that formerly made sense of reality, teenagers are in a highly experimental mode and want exposure to as many viable options as may exist.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Phillips, *Millennials are Spiritually Diverse*.

<sup>2</sup>Barna, *Churchless*, 5.

<sup>3</sup>Barna, *Real Teens* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001).

The Lord made a promise that He would give the church a new heart. In the book of Jeremiah, it is proclaimed, “I will give them a heart to know me, that I am Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.”<sup>4</sup> With this said, the church can look forward to the Millennials returning back in fellowship and to the heart of God “thou shall also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee.”<sup>5</sup> Just as the prodigal son returned to his father, so shall the Millennials. “God is raising them up with vision throughout the world. These emerging leaders are eager to follow the call of Christ. The big question is whether those who are in the church will have the vision to receive them and embrace their visions.”<sup>6</sup>

Certainly it is the desire that the church will see the Millennials’ vision. Paul explains this when he sends out a Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom to the faithful saints who are in Ephesus. His ultimate desire is that they will see God and the hope they have in Christ,

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power <sup>which</sup> He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Jeremiah 24:7.

<sup>5</sup>Job 22:28.

<sup>6</sup>George Barna, *Leaders on Leadership* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997), 122.

<sup>7</sup>Ephesians 1:15-23.

Paul explains to the saints how blessed they were to be called by Jesus and made holy by love. Paul continued to say that the Lord made a decision to adopt man into His family through Jesus Christ long time ago. Therefore, it was the blood that Jesus shed on the cross, which made them free from punishment and penalty. Not only did they receive freedom, but also God released a plan. This plan revealed how everything would eventually unite in Christ.

Hence, this prayer is certainly relevant to the Church today. The Gospel of Christ when demonstrated in the shedding of His blood at the Cross “Connects us to God, ourselves, and others; it places something alive and wonderful in our forgiven hearts that bridges the gap of separateness and joins us in life-bearing union. We now have something that has the power to change the entire course of someone else’s existence.”<sup>8</sup> Hence, in preparation to meet and reclaim Millennials, the church must have the wisdom and revelation from God. Some of this wisdom will be obtained from understanding the current social context in which Millennials live along with their thoughts, issues, interest, beliefs, practices, fears, purpose, truth, and etc.<sup>9</sup> Also, it is necessary to remain abreast of the current trends and resource data that pertains to them and how it relates to the future.

Secondly, “God desires that beyond mere head knowledge, our hearts would be changed and our lives and actions would be affected by what we learn.”<sup>10</sup> More wisdom and inner healing will manifest as people submit their minds to be transformed by the Holy Spirit, Scripture, meditation, prayer, worship, seeking the face of God, and most of all love. “There is power within the life of every Christian waiting to be released, a power that could lead to further and

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<sup>8</sup>Larry Crabb, *Connecting* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 1005), 6.

<sup>9</sup>Guns, “7 Keys to Reaching the Millennial Generation,” 29.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

deeper change, and a power within you that could help someone else connect more intimately to the heart of Christ.”<sup>11</sup> The revelation of God is empowered throughout Scripture and provides the ingredients that are needed to grow, and mature in a revived relationship with God. As past lessons are learned and the principles are incorporated, the church will renew an oneness with God, so that they will be able to follow His instructions.

The preparation of the Church will culminate not by programs, deeds, or the hands of man, but through grace and by the spirit of God. “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, saying, not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, said the Lord of hosts.”<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the church will be prepared for the return of the Millennium when the glory of God is manifested. “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). What is the glory of God? “God’s glory is defined as the manifestation of Christ’s presence among His people and the magnification of His person by His people.”<sup>13</sup> Understanding the glory of God is an essential path to the growth and maturity in the life of a believer. The dimensions of glory prepare a person to receive and maintain the power and presence of God in their life. In the Old Testament, God’s glory was shown in a cloud by day and a fire by night. “This was the symbol of God’s presence and supernatural provision in the midst of His people.”<sup>14</sup> Hence this same authority is present today and it will signify the essence of God’s glory. Therefore, when participants from the church complete the training model; it is the prayer that they will be prepared and empowered to go

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<sup>11</sup>Crabb, *Connecting*, 7.

<sup>12</sup>Zechariah 4:6.

<sup>13</sup>Henderson, *Fresh Encounters*, 71.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, 72.



forth, connect, and reclaim the Millennials back to the Gospel faith through God's supernatural power. In the Millennials contains the connecting key to a gloried future in Jesus Christ. To God be the glory, amen!

**APPENDIX A**  
**MILLENNIAL GENERATION SURVEY**

Pastor and Youth Leaders

1. What generation group do you fall in?

- ☐ 18-29 (Millennial)
- ☐ 30-48 (Generation X)
- ☐ 49-67 (Baby Boomers)
- ☐ 68+ (Elders)

2. What is your church membership?

- ☐ 100 or less
- ☐ 100-200
- ☐ 200-500
- ☐ 500-1000
- ☐ 1000+.

3. How many church members are between the age of 18 and 29?

- ☐ 25 or less
- ☐ 26 - 99
- ☐ 100+

4. How many students remain active in church after high school graduation?

- ☐ 25 or less
- ☐ 26 - 99
- ☐ 100+
- ☐ Unknown

5. What ministries are available in your church for a member between the ages of 18 and 29?

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6. How do you identify the spiritual gifts of your church members?

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7. Are there opportunities made available for members between the age of 18 and 29 to use their spiritual gifts?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, they include:

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8. How can the ministry for members between the age of 18 and 29 at your church be improved?

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9. How might the millennial generation (18-29 years old) reshape the church in the future?

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10. What can be done to win the millennial generation (18-29 years old) back to church?

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**APPENDIX B****MILLENNIAL GENERATION SURVEY  
18 to 29 YEARS OLD**

1. How often do you attend church?

- ☐ 2+ times a week
- ☐ 1 time a week
- ☐ 2 times a month
- ☐ 6 times a year
- ☐ 2 times a year
- ☐ Only on special occasions (funerals, weddings, etc.)

2. What is your purpose for attending church?

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3. How many of your church members are between the age of 18 and 29?

- ☐ 25 or less
- ☐ 26 - 99
- ☐ 100+

4. What ministries are available in your church for a member between the ages of 18 and 29?

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5. What ministries are you involved in church?

- ☐ Sunday school
  - ☐ Bible Study
  - ☐ Small Group
  - ☐ Other:
- 

6. Are you pleased with the opportunities made available to use your spiritual gifts?

- ☐ Extremely pleased
- ☐ Moderately pleased
- ☐ Slightly pleased
- ☐ Extremely displeased

7. What are your most favorite experiences at church?

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8. What are your least favorite experiences at your church?

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9. How can the ministry for the members between the age of 18 and 29 be improved and or reshaped for the future?

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10. What can be done to win the millennial generation (18-29 year old) back to church?

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# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

December 18, 2014

Alethia J. Simmons

IRB Exemption 2036.121814: Rescuing the Millennial Generation: Vital Lessons Learned and Practical Principles to Reclaiming This Group

Dear Alethia,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:

(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

**Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.**

*Professor, IRB Chair*

**Counseling**

**(434) 592-4054**

