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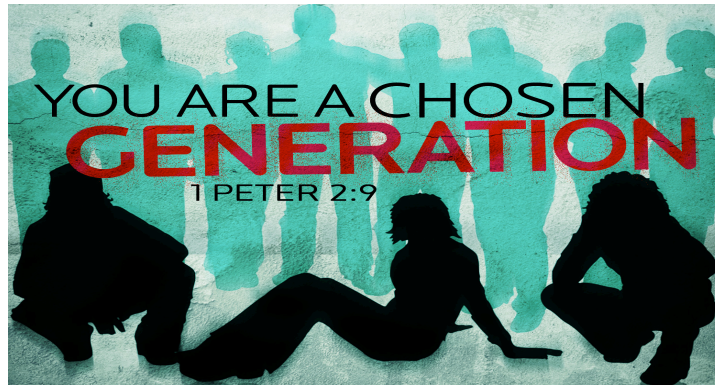


***Shaking Up the Status Quo:
Why the Younger Generation will not Stand for the
Tame and Traditional Church!***

By

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The Bible declares in 1 Peter 2:9 as Christians:

“We (you) are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God’s instruments to do His work and speak out for Him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.”¹

As Christ followers we are a privileged generation and yet in the midst of a culture that stumbles over Jesus Christ, disobeys the message of Christ, and then persecutes any who embrace Christ, believers can easily become discouraged from continuing in the journey with Christ. The thought of further growing pains is certainly not attractive to everyone. So Peter laid out in ascending order some of the incredible spiritual riches that believers have in Christ. This encourages us and reminds us of the value God places on each of us. But often it is demanding to do the work of ministry amongst the generational differences, which make up most churches. I want to look at in this edition of the E-magazine: *“Shaking Up the Status Quo: Why the Younger Generation will not Stand for the Tame and Traditional Church!”*

Twenty years ago I shared thirteen predictions in one of my books that would come true for what was beginning to be called back then *Generation X*. It is amazing to see that while not every one of those predictions has come true, the overwhelming majority of them have. My favorite one was that this *X-er Generation* would become avid coffee consumers and would focus less on sweets. Today this “*X Generation*” is the generation, which has led the coffee revolution.

¹ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005), 1 Peter 2:9–10.

Then there was the “*Millennial generation*” a subset of the Y generation which has entered the work place during the last decade and their dreams and desires are much different than previous generations needs and necessities. How does this group look at churches today when they desire a place to worship? It would help all of us to understand their likes and dislikes in order to advance the gospel to upcoming generations. More recently the “*Y Generation*” has become much the talk as it is impacting the local church and many believe that this generation is the churches last chance to save their future. Take a look at the Generational Timeline below to see where you fall in relation to the seven specific sub-groups that make up the various generations found in most churches.

GENERATION TIMELINE			
1922–1945	1946–1964	1965–1980	1981–2000
Veterans, Silent, Traditionalists	Baby Boomers	Generation X, Gen X, Xers	Generation Y, Gen Y, Millennial, Echo Boomers

There is a shaking going on in the North American church today and this shaking of the status quo, is being led by the “Millennials,” the “X-er Generation” and the “Y Generation.” No longer will the young consent for the tried and true forms of their grandparents and their grandparent’s parents worship experience. The younger generations will not stand for the tame and traditional and if your church simply refuses to embrace this new reality it might become one of those 8,000+ churches, which will begin closing their doors annually. Someone has wisely said that “if you seek real happiness which will last a life time, invest in and help the next generation.”



Here in central Florida we know that our population is changing quickly. We are seeing the flight of older generations to the shores of our states coastlines while we see an influx of younger families coming in to find work and a place to begin ones life journey. The church must take action sooner than later if it is going to have the opportunity to reach those moving into our area with the Gospel. As your Executive Director of Missions, I work with churches all the time, which wait too long and eventually lose the vital critical mass necessary to keep a church growing and going. When all of the possibilities have been used up it is not the time to finally consider other ways to reach a new audience for the local church. Sometimes churches will even spend more time in the last throws of decline arguing more about who will

own property than they are concerned about leaving it for another generation of Christians to utilize it for God's glory and kingdom expansion. I believe with all of my heart that past generations of Southern Baptist ought to leave it for future generations of Southern Baptist!

Here in the Greater Orlando Baptist Association as your Executive Director of Missions, I challenge churches to bless future generations by deeding over their buildings to a like-minded Southern Baptist Church or the local association so we might utilize it for the planting or restarting of a church plant or revitalization effort. It is so vital that we do not lose *property signatures* that could be used for planting and revitalization. What I have learned over three decades of church planting and revitalization is that once the property is sold that *land signature* is often just not available to the local church or Christian causes any longer. You can never buy them back so developing and embracing the godly attitude of blessing future generations is key.

Ten key Gen Y characteristics

1. Continually connected
2. Speak their own language
3. Skeptical of authority
4. Influenced by peers
5. Seek recognition and fame
6. Enjoy absurdity and odd humor
7. Embrace a variety of subcultures
8. Skim text and information quickly
9. Easily bored
10. Expressive and digitally creative

Thom Rainer says, "The Millennial generation of young people are not seeking to be adversarial; they are simply asking tough questions those of us in older generations are reticent to address." This emerging generation now known as the Y Generation or iY Generation because of its ability to utilize technologies and the internet, is the future of America and it is the future of most churches as well! Yet they have their hands full navigating societal pressures and being thrust into adulthood at a rampant pace. The pressure for the Y Generation is intense and the stakes are high. Generation Y has much to offer, but they need mentors to direct them and engage them in ways which speak relevance to their generation. We need to channel their energy into the local church. This generation must be lead in ways to allow them to face the challenges they need and make the impact so vital for the local church. These children of the late Baby Boomer generation and early X-er Generation were born between 1984 and 2002. They will become the largest generation even surpassing the Baby Boomer generation in the world.



They are the digital, technological, and internet generation. Already one half of the world's population is under twenty-five years old. That represents a little more than three billion people across the globe. Within America their numbers already rival the baby boomers and as immigration continues to influence our land the numbers might grow as large as a hundred million, nearly one third of our total population.

We have heard for a long time that we need to embrace change and yet the biggest opposition to change is appearing in the Veterans generations made up of the veterans, builder, and silent as well as the initial early boomer generations.



Those born before 1955 are struggling with where the church of the Americas must go in order to reach the young across our western hemisphere. Younger individuals want to worship and want to make their lives count for something within the Christian realm, yet is it habitually the older generations, which refuse, rebuff, and reject the changes, which will allow the younger generations to connect to the local church. I was thinking about the change in the American church from old sacred hymns to more contemporary hymns. The late builder and early boomer generations coming home from war desiring a new and different type of hymns led this transformation. New hymnbooks were created in almost every protestant evangelical denomination to meet their needs and wants. Change was key to these new forms of worship for those returning and yet the day

in which we live it is often these very generations who are the actual ones resisting the change in music form for today's edgier young.

Consider if you will as our population explodes along with generational differences in mind-set what will happen as is happening as they come together to create adversarial circumstances that will steadily deteriorate, creating a perfect storm that can spell disaster for the church struggling to be revitalized. Change is all around us and we must embrace it right away and not fear those things we do not yet know. Consider these change factors for the future:

- Fifty percent of the American workforce will retire within the next seven years.
- The largest number of college graduates entered the workforce four years ago in 2009.
- Many older business leaders lack the skills necessary to motivate and retain talented younger employees.
- Unable to attract young people, some businesses run the risk of being unequipped to compete in the future.

These same conclusions might be a sobering wakeup call for the local church.

- Many churches have become unable to draw the younger audience in to the church and are occupied by retirees and are quickly losing the critical mass necessary to keep the church growing. If the church lacks the young today in the next ten years it is facing a demising dilemma that signals church closures.
- Young business adults are searching for a place to worship, which connects with their new ideas. These graduates could be a great influence for the renewal of a local church if the church sought to develop new inviting as well as compelling formats, which matched the needs and expectations of the younger central Florida resident.
- Like business leaders, which lack the skills necessary to motivate and retain the younger generation, churches often fail to develop the skill sets necessary to reach into these generational differences and touch younger individuals and families with the gospel.
- A church which is unable to attract younger people like its business world equivalent runs the risk of being unequipped and unfitted to draw the younger generations into their local church expression.

Even in the work place there are generational differences. Please observe the following chart, which delineates the differences between the Veterans (Builders) Boomers, Millennial and Y generations. What each generation's value is a good sign for the local church seeking to remain focused on reaching generation after generation with the gospel message.

WORKPLACE CHARACTERISTICS				
	Veterans (1922–1945)	Baby Boomers (1946–1964)	Generation X (1965–1980)	Generation Y (1981–2000)
Work Ethic and Values	Hard work Respect authority Sacrifice Duty before fun Adhere to rules	Workaholics Work efficiently Crusading causes Personal fulfillment Desire quality Question authority	Eliminate the task Self-reliance Want structure and direction Skeptical	What's next Multitasking Tenacity Entrepreneurial Tolerant Goal oriented
Work Is ...	An obligation	An exciting adventure	A difficult challenge A contract	A means to an end Fulfillment
Leadership Style	Directive Command-and-control	Consensual Collegial	Everyone is the same Challenge others Ask why	*TBD
Interactive Style	Individual	Team player Loves to have meetings	Entrepreneur	Participative
Communications	Formal Memo	In person	Direct Immediate	E-mail Voice mail
Feedback and Rewards	No news is good news Satisfaction in a job well done	Don't appreciate it Money Title recognition	Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing? Freedom is the best reward	Whenever I want it, at the push of a button Meaningful work
Messages That Motivate	Your experience is respected	You are valued You are needed	Do it your way Forget the rules	You will work with other bright, creative people
Work and Family Life	Ne'er the twain shall meet	No balance Work to live	Balance	Balance

*As this group has not spent much time in the workforce, this characteristic has yet to be determined.

Immediately you can see the differences between each generation in the chart above. There are generational values that come into play each time we gather to worship.

Think about this if you will! If you have within your church one group that was raised on a very liturgical form of worship that emphasized highly sacred songs of the early nineteenth and twentieth century, but your younger teenagers in the youth group and those even younger in the older children's area which parents are now leading the church were raised on Toby Mac, there will be enormous tension. Many will unwisely try to merge the two traditions of musical preference only to find it will not unite but might almost destroy.

That is why most churches with multiple generations within them are going to multiple worship services in order to address these generational differences. Merging two styles into one worship service simply will not help the church grow today! Both groups leave worship disappointed and no one is drawn closer to the Lord in that situation. Our generational differences collide and we are left with more destruction than we were able to overcome. The understanding has to be that

generations within your own church have different experiences, views, values, and needs even though they share the same worship space. One of the greatest benefits the millennial generation brings into our churches today is their focus on the community in which the church is located. They are not content simply to offer ministries to those who come “to” the church facilities; they are going “into” the community to serve the merchants and residents who work and live there.

We have a spiritual enemy that wishes to divide us, so that we do not work together. I also have a hunch that Satan wants to divide us generationally, so that we do not work together. When it comes to multiple generations within the church, division is bad, but the tension can be good because we need each other. I am able to do so much of what I do today because of the wisdom of those who have come before me. Within the business world generational differences jump out at the companies leaders. The veteran and early builder generations displayed maturity and an amazing sense of loyalty as well as allegiance to a church or even a company they serve. In contrast, today's younger generations show an incredible brilliance and application for the task yet they each have a ready in place exit strategy if they become dissatisfied and bored with the current state. If participation at work or at church is not offered then for the sake of balance the swift movement to something else takes place.

What makes the *under-30 group* the way they are?

This is not an effort to blame any given institution yet the elementary school structure changed how teachers taught and rewarded for accomplishment. Teachers praised students not just when a task was completed, but along the way to the eventual goal. They stopped to celebrate along the way to success, creating motivation through little rewards rather than a big reward at the end. The teachers also promoted self-esteem by making sure every child knew he or she was cared for regardless of accomplishments. The recurring message delivered through this approach goes like this: “We love you; we know you can do it; and here is a little prize at the halfway mark to prove that to you.” More than just the educational process molds the ***under-30 group***; they also grew up in the most prosperous and comfortable society the world has ever known. We gave them a lot and told them they could have anything they wanted in life. Now, the ***under-30's*** are here to collect! They now want what they want when they want it and this affects the local church and we must be willing to work in this philosophical view. They won. The bottom line: We did this through our willingness to embrace everyone and to advance everyone together!

So what's the good news about the under-30 group?

The majority of people within this age specific workforce are very capable and committed to each other. No generation has ever had the loyalty to each other that this group possesses. They work well in teams and achieve remarkable results

in record time if managed effectively. It's true that they want to do this wearing flip-flops, but the results we have seen from the well-managed are impressive.

Each generation, it seems, is uniquely suited for the evolving world it will inherit. If you watch the news, you hear the latest reports on almost any and every subject and it is this generation of the **under-30 group** which can make the most of a world like that. If it is a celebrity melt down, a plane crash or a death toll from a war the under-30s have no problem with it. They are over informed and underdressed and totally acclimated towards navigating the busy future with ease. The church today would do well to come to grips with the values and lifestyles of this generational group. Many will be leading in your church and if you are an older individual you must learn to embrace these volunteers because you need their vision, energy, and willingness to volunteer and set to the work of the ministry. In their terms and not yours. It is no longer your fathers Oldsmobile is it?

What's up with the over-40s group?

The **over-40s group** appears to be kind of stressed out in many ways! The **over-40 group** was raised to believe that working hard is proof of commitment. This is the group, which gave us workaholics wanting to advance in life and achieve what their fathers had. The **over-40s group** valued being needed and wanted to display how vital they were to an organization. Their lives were out of balance because they lived to work while younger generations work to live. The **over-40s group** also believes that working late proves that you are working hard. They think that leaving before 5 p.m. means you are not management material, while the **under-30s group** believes that working until 8 p.m. every night just means you lack time management and life balance. The **under-30 group** grew up in families where Mom or Dad (or both) always worked late and they want something different. Men of the **over-40s group** believe they are what they do for a living. They work almost all of the time and when they are not officially working they are thinking about work. Relationships are pushed down in the priority pole for males of this group because they live to work. This is a hard group to get involved in church because they are so busy doing work stuff they do not have sufficient time for the Lord's stuff.

How can we get more involvement from the under-30 group?

Wishing people were like you is not a strategy. You have to motivate the **under-30s group** the way they grew up being motivated. They need to be praised along the way to the goal. For churches utilizing a largely **under-30** work pool learn to celebrate the small victories on the road to success and quit telling these volunteers about long term plans for the church and for the ministries of the church. These individuals plan in five years is to have a new plan. This plan most likely will not involve you and the church unless a significant spiritual journey has been developed in their lives, which will untie them to the great causes of Christ Jesus. No

offense, but your cause as a church to do something later, (2-3 years) over something sooner, (next month) does not work for them. You need to involve them by giving them short, tight deadlines and make sure your desired goals are not hindered by your church's outdated technology tools. If their notebook at home is twice as fast as the one at church and you demand all work to be done on your tried and true "Tandy" they will believe you have given them a worthless job to accomplish and resent your giving them the task. The **under-30s group** wants to do it right and with excellence in the first few days not after 300 revisions. Be sure you have procedure that will allow that to happen. The **under-30s group** would ask you a question this way: "How can we get the **over-40s** to see we can do the job much more effectively if you would let us do it a little bit our way?"



Lessons to gather from the **over-40s** for the **under-30s group**.

- Let them know you understand their old way first. You must honor the past in order to move into the future.
- If you have an innovative new technique and you fail their little quiz on the old method then you are toast. Older church volunteers are often offended by the younger generations unwillingness to listen to what has worked previously.
- Seek the counsel of the older volunteers if for nothing more than being polite.
- What the **over-40 group** really wants from you is appreciation and admiration for their individual ministry journey in the past.

What do we need to do to work more effectively with each other as a church team?

First we need to get over ourselves! It is not about us; it is all about the Lord and His work. People who grow up at different generational points have a unique experience and outlook toward life. Though these differences seem a bit greater than some in the past, they are in effect natural. We have already established in the

past 30 years that dealing with diversity and understanding each other's generational or cultural differences is critical to communication and success. So, letting people be who they are and dealing with it is not new. It has always been easy to say, "*We were all young once,*" but the real truth is that we were not all young under the same circumstances and at the same time. One day the ***under-30 group*** will grow up and will face a new gathering of young people. They will be saying things, which will confuse us and cause us to wonder about their future. Much like we are doing today with those generations which follow us no matter in what generation we live.

Practical Advice for the Various Generational Ministers

While much of this edition of our e-magazine has been focused on volunteers within our churches, a word needs to be offered for the clergy both young and old. Remember the scripture:

Now that I am old and gray, do not abandon me, O God. Let me proclaim your power to this new generation, your mighty miracles to all who come after me (Psalm 71:18).

The Older Patriarchal Minister Should...

- Not dislike, fear, or judge the next generation of ministers, but rather believe in them, coach them, and invest in their ministries.
- Not treat them as the future leaders of upcoming decades, but rather understand they are the new leaders of today's church.
- Not treat them strangely because they act differently, but rather understand they are like you as you were different than your predecessors.
- Not treat them as a danger to you and your ministry. Such insecurity hurts the church and makes it hard to invest in the younger generation of ministers.
- Not give meaningless assignments, but give away authority so a leader can be made.
- Become their greatest cheerleaders showing a high degree of belief in them.
- Embrace the season of life you are in and provide for the future by developing successors. Your age and experience is not a liability.
- Become a spiritual Father to the younger generations.

The Younger Generational Minister Should...

- Seek to understand that you need those who have come before you.
- Work towards not displaying the sense of entitlement that your generation has fixated upon. You do not need to have your parent's lifestyle at 23 years of age. It took them a lifetime, yours will also.

- Seek to understand that you tend to overestimate what God wants to do through you in the short run.
- This disillusion you and then causes you to underestimate what God will do through you in the long run.
- Understand that because the younger generation feels entitled, it is a generation that does not show honor well. Andy Stanley says, “Honor publicly leads to influence privately.”
- As a Young generational minister if you want to lead up, show honor.
- Learn to serve under people well in order for you to be over someone later. Honor values, respects, and highly esteems. Honor lifts up. Dishonor tears down. Respect is earned, but honor is given.
- Understand the truth that some of you need to repent because you have dishonored those above you, and that dishonor is hindering you from being able to achieve what you need to do.
- Always be a life learner and have a teachable spirit. You are the most cause driven, mission minded generation in modern history. If you will come under authority and be teachable, you will be the greatest generation of our time.
- Understand that the Lord our God believes in you. He chooses you! Do not underestimate your future.
- Learn one final note: Give God glory by taking the best from those who have come before us. Quit messing around in pride and arrogance and do something that glorifies the cause of Christ.

Scripture is helpful for the young as well when we read that Jesus told them:

“A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his relatives and his own family” (Mark 6:4).

What’s the significance of generations? First, they tend to think and act in unison on many matters. And those decisions influence the nation and entire culture as a whole. As Christians, what can we learn from these generational distinctions so as to better attract them and serve their needs?

In looking at Elder generations, Baby Boomers, and Baby Busters, we’ve learned that faith matters. But how that faith is defined, classified, and a part of everyday life differs from group to group. To *Elder generations*, faith is the foundation of your life. It builds character and provides perspective. It puts you in touch with your family, your community, your friends, and God. Elder generations, therefore, appreciate religious institutions as vehicles for facilitating the value derived from faith. *Boomers* appreciate faith because it provides security. The traditions and structures may not work for Boomers, but the content of faith makes some sense. Boomers seek to absorb the “right information” and apply it to their daily battle for progress and supremacy. They’ll accept religious institutions as long as they produce more benefit than cost. *Busters* see faith as a framework for discovering important insights and developing lasting relationships. The institutions

are irrelevant to them since their personal interest is in people, not trappings. For them, faith is a macro value, not an entire, independent dimension of life.

As Christians, our religious faith should influence how we see and respond to generational distinctives. Rather than focus on how to maintain the distinctives of our generations, our challenge is to take the principles found in the Bible and strategically apply them to the tensions and opportunities resident within the generational battles that rage around us.

Why So Many are Disengaged in Worship Today

If you speak to various generations of church worshippers today it will not take long to discover that there is a challenge before the local church in seeking to keep the generations engaged while in worship. Those gifted with great singers, an incredible band or orchestra, powerful worship leaders and an awesome preacher still feel challenged with what it takes to bring the various generations to a point of worship together. Usually one group is blessed while another generation struggles with the content and the pace. Even the best of the best realize that there are challenges to drawing all generations together at the same time. Age preferences come into play almost every Lord's Day as we gather to worship in any church in America.

Sermon Engagement or Disengagement

Some participants prefer the sermons short while others see nothing wrong with longer length messages. It has always amazed me that there is such a polarization of opinions when it comes to the length of sermons. I had a discussion with a dear saint from the American Baptist Denomination a few days ago while I was in New Jersey. He was remarking about the former pastor now retired only preached for about twenty minutes while the new pastor preaches for about forty minutes. He lamented how much he missed the shorter sermons but while he was reminiscing he made the statement: "You can't argue with the results now! The place is packed every Sunday."

I have been told for years that a pastor's sermon lengths are becoming shorter. While I do not believe this to be the case in a growing church it might be evidence for a declining church. My father's generations said that in the 1950's the average preacher preached around thirty minutes for his message. There is no real evidence of this but many seniors believe this to be the truth. By the time these elder generations were in their silver cresting years many of their pastors, which were functioning more as a chaplain, preached about twenty-two minutes. Older individuals declare today that sermons should be no longer than fifteen to eighteen minutes. Excuses relating to individuals shorter attention spans are often suggested.

The reality relating to length and attention spans are irrelevant. The number-one context for the length of sermons is the size of the crowd. Three basic generalizations apply. First, the larger the number of people in the room, and the

greater the degree of anonymity among the people, and the larger the proportion who have been worshipping there for less than two years, the more time is required for music and intercessory prayer to transform that collection of individuals into a worshipping community. Small congregations take five to fifteen minutes. Very large congregations take twenty-five to thirty-five minutes. Second, the larger the crowd and the greater the emphasis on teaching, the longer the sermon should be. That also applies to the need for humor, change of pace, revealing personal anecdotes, and redundancy. Third, unless it includes a highly liturgical format built around the Lord's Supper, the larger the crowd, the longer the service. Forty to fifty minutes may be appropriate when attendance is less than a hundred, but if it exceeds five hundred, the worship experience should be in the sixty-five to ninety-minute range.

Musical Engagement or Disengagement

I like worship music loud, fast, and engaging. My father likes worship music reflective, quiet, and slower. When we worship together usually one of us is left with a desire for more. If I worship with my Dad, I know it will be very slow and I will really need to concentrate to remain connected with the worship leader. If Dad worships with me he will probably need two Aspirin before worship and a few more afterwards because his head will be splitting. Different generations respond to different things when it comes to worship. Let us consider a few differences when it comes to worship:

Spiritual Passion and Synergy

If there is not an overarching belief that your worship services have a biblical mandate to engage people in praise and worship, then you can fail miserably. In fact, spiritual passion and synergy just might cover over a lot of the limitations you have. Worship regardless whether or not it is traditional, blended or contemporary should draw the largest number of participants to the Lord in each worship service. If older people attend the early worship service then it would stand to reason that a more traditional mix of music would be used. If younger generations attend a particular worship service than a more contemporary musical selection could be offered. Missing the target audience is unwise and will cause great confusion in the worship setting and cause individuals to become disengaged.

Cultural Engagement or Disengagement

Having planted churches with all types of peoples groups, there is a big difference how cultures celebrate and experience the presence of God. There are differing cultural expressions that are drawn from regional, ethnic, and age appropriate traditions. If your selection does not match the group you are endeavoring to reach, you will miss an opportunity for evangelism for sure.

Theological Engagement or Disengagement

In some situations the engagement or disengagement has nothing to do with neither the sound nor the volume. This disconnect has to do with your church's view on the scriptures. It is critical to select music that matches your church's theology. Theology is engaging and you should present your theological beliefs with the best songs possible.

Leadership Engagement or Disengagement

If the pastor is leaning towards modern worship and a few committees and factions are rebellious of him, then your church will feel this every Sunday morning. This is not generational, per se. It could be about anything, really. If the worship leadership feels dissatisfied with the pastor's course of action, then it will impact things as well. In general, conflict that is not addressed will in some way play itself out in our public services. Count on it. Conflict is always with us. The key is to deal with it early and upfront.

Strategic Engagement or Disengagement

This is when needed strategic changes are made, but they are done much too quickly without relationally walking people through the impact it may have on them. The jolt that some members feel when changes come too quickly has a whiplash effect that creates an imbalance. If you suddenly make a change, without your membership being lead slowly, your services will feel the imbalance. The principle here is to be sure your strategy is connected to a unified vision. Your implementers cannot compensate for leaders who shift too often too fast.

New Leadership Engagement or Disengagement

Yes, that amazing worship leader who aced the interview and wowed you all in his audition is now not so exciting after six weeks. He prayed too long twice, making the pastor visibly frustrated. People who did not chime in either way about his coming now complain. It takes a while for a pair of jeans to feel real comfy. So, expect some bumps. It is normal. Trust God's process and empower him or her to lead you. Time is on everyone's side.

Creative Rut Engagement or Disengagement

Instead of new leadership, the ones who have been around forever have taken all the risks they are going to take in their lifetime and no one new is being developed. The result is the same. Yes, for a couple years it worked well. Now, something has to change; but what? It could be tired worship leaders need space. What new challenges, learning experiences or mentoring have your worship leaders had recently? It is a new economy, but a rut costs

more than you know. Keeping the church engaged and avoid allowing them to fall into the rut of disengagement.

Weak Structure Engagement or Disengagement

Systems are important. Planning, evaluation and delivering tools, such as music to musicians and schedules to volunteers, matter. When your systems are being overtaxed or if they are not well developed, your service execution suffers. This means engagement is at risk. People follow who they trust. If structures are weak, they feel that. Button up this area, and it just might help.

As you work on this list, the key is to always go back to first things—what you believe God wants from your worship services. Are lives being changed? Are people making decisions to follow God?

Bringing Back the Young

Bringing the younger generations back towards the Son is not an easy task. Perhaps the four most pointed words describing the younger Y generation is that they are a generation often overwhelmed, over connected, over protected, and over served. These young individuals often feel stressed out from both internal and external surroundings. Some of this is due to personal issues and some of this is due from the pressure we as parents placed upon them to perform. Living in a generation of connectedness they have grown up in a world of online games and texting. The result is a generation which lacks abilities of communication other than viral socialization. What comes out of this, is lower relationship skills and the inability to put together lasting communication above a few words on a screen. This group is a group short of patience, listening skills, and lack the ability to resolve conflict. When they are overwhelmed they either push back or retreat into a world of on screen short-term surface level relationship. If the trend continues, this generation of overconnectedness will run the risk of trading quality face-to-face relationships for virtual relationships which could prove hazardous. They are an over protected and served generation by Mom and Dad which resulted in poor coping skills. Yet this Y generation has most assuredly developed a strong self-esteem.

The Y Generation is a generation of energetic, confident, and capable people. They dream big, care deeply for their friends, and thrive on activity.

Here is a call and a challenge for the local church when seeking to minister to the Y generation:

They seek to belong first before they ever think about believing. They are joiners first and foremost. They are relational over logical. They are right brain creative over left-brain knowledgeable. For the local church, if you embrace them first, they will embrace you and your idea.

They desire experience over an explanation. Gone are the lecture days of drawing younger kids in. Captivate their minds by capturing their interests first. Allow them to be doers before they become see-ers. Action is first interaction is second.

They will embrace a cause much sooner than they will embrace a course. Spark a passion within them and you will have ample opportunity to teach them deeper things.

They desire a guide on their side before a sage on the stage. They are not in search of an expert but someone to journey with them. Relationship is far greater than information. Mentors and life coaches are what they are seeking.

They desperately want to play before they pay. Instant connectedness. Instant gratification. Instant reward. These are all part of their desire to play before they pay. They are not the waiting generation but the doing one. We must connect quickly to this group if we are going to connect at all. Relevancy must be quick because they will not give you any length to prove your point.

They want to use others but not be used by others. They are a generation, which uses technology, instant messaging, internet, cell phones and smart phones. Yet they are cautious of those which try to use them. They want to be the drivers of ideas and not the receivers of ones. They like being in control and having a voice. Common goals are big in their book.

They seek transformation over a touch. This generation has high expectations and even their educational learning needs to be wrapped in fun entertaining formats. Gone is the day when a Sunday School teacher can crack open a quarterly right as this group arrives and survive the hour.

For the church to reach this generation it means that we will need to adjust to them and not they adjust to us. We must rethink what we are saying and how we are saying it in order that we might present the Gospel to this generation. We must foster friendships and develop peer groups for them. The Y generation needs a purpose so give them a great purpose within the church and not just a surface one. Offer them options and be flexible so they will be able to fit in. Place a high value on their willingness to volunteer. Give them opportunities to make a difference in the world right through the local church. Challenge the Y Generation with change while making creative use of their energy and desire for something new. Elevate and empower their strengths allowing them to impact their generation and impart into the next one that follows theirs.

Final thoughts for reaching this generation

By 2025, 76 million Baby Boomers will be in retirement according to the U.S. Department of Labor and there will be only 46 million younger workers waiting to

take their place. The X-er Generation will not be big enough to handle the need and the Y Generation is the fastest and biggest segment of the workforce. Reach out to them now. Embrace them into your ministry. Regardless of the generation we live in, we must extend grace to one another. The younger generations need the older; the older generations need the younger. For those in the younger generations, we must recognize our need to honor and value those who have come before us. For those in the elder generations, please recognize that the same Holy Spirit in you is alive in this emerging Y Generation, and that God has used a cadre of young men and women (Jesus and his disciples) in the past to transform the world. Give us grace too; we need all the help and guidance we can get. Generational isolation simply will not allow the church to thrive. Yes, perhaps it is less awkward to worship with people "like me." Yet we see Jesus inviting both the old and young into His embrace, all generations crowding around to worship Him as King. Could the church begin to foster that kind of kingdom-culture, a culture where generational demographics are not relational barriers? May the church, both young and old, lead the way into tomorrow together? I pray that God will bless these upcoming generations. The future rest on their shoulders and we must do everything within our power to help them be prepared to lead the church of tomorrow by embracing, empowering and equipping them today.

I began with this passage and I decided to give a few final thoughts with this passage in closing. First Peter 2:9 reminds us:

"We (you) are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do His work and speak out for Him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference He made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted."²

Because we are a ***chosen people*** it emphasizes God's loving resourcefulness in bringing all people to himself and allowing us to be a part of His church. We are ***a royal priesthood*** which reminds us as believers that as priests we serve royalty. We have not landed a maid-service position. We are part of God's "forever kingdom." Peter says we are ***a holy nation*** emphasizing that God has set apart the church for His use and that as individual believers have a valuable contribution to make to His church.

Recommended Reading for Future Minded Leaders

Tim Elmore, *Generation iY: Our Last Chance to Save Their Future*, (Atlanta Poet Gardener Publishing), 2010.

David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity and Why it Matters*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books), 2007.

² Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005), 1 Peter 2:9–10.

William Mahedy and Janet Bernardi, *A Generation Alone: Xers Making a Place in the World*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 1994.

Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc.), 2003.

Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation*, (Nashville: B7H Publishing Group), 2011.

Jean M. Twenge. *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled-and More Miserable Than Ever Before* (New York: Free Press), 2007.

David Walls and Max Anders, vol. 11, *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 31.

Ron Zemke, Clarire Raines, and Bob Filipczak, *Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in Your Workplace*, (New York: American Management Association), 2000.